Dickson
Teacher's Bible Commentary

with the

Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide

Roger E. Dickson

www.roger–e–dickson.org
Philadelphia, Western Cape, South Africa
Hutchinson & Stafford, Kansas, U.S.A.

Copyrights
***Dickson Teacher's Bible* (New Testament): © 1987, 2001**
***Dickson Teacher's Bible* (Old & New Testaments): © 2010, 2011, 2021**
***Dickson Teacher's Bible Commentary*: © 2023**
Scripture quotations: *International King James Version*: © 2001

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bible Books and Abbreviations

Old Testament

Genesis (Gn) 9
Exodus (Ex) 38
Leviticus (Lv) 64
Numbers (Nm) 79
Deuteronomy (Dt) 96
Joshua (Ja) 120
Judges (Jg) 133
Ruth (Rt) 198
1 Samuel (1 Sm) 151
2 Samuel (2 Sm) 167
1 Kings (1 Kg) 181
2 Kings (2 Kg) 202
1 Chronicles (1 Ch) 222
2 Chronicles (2 Ch) 236
Ezra (Er) 254
Nehemiah (Ne) 262
Esther (Et) 274
Job (Jb) 281
Psalms (Ps) 303
Proverbs (Pv) 365
Ecclesiastes (Ec) 389
Song of Solomon (Ss) 400
Isaiah (Is) 406
Jeremiah (Jr) 448
Lamentations (Lm) 485
Ezekiel (Ez) 490
Daniel (Dn) 515
Hosea (Hs) 537
Joel (Jl) 547
Amos (Am) 551
Obadiah (Ob) 558
Jonah (Jh) 560
Micah (Mc) 563
Nahum (Nh) 570
Habakkuk (Hk) 523
Zephaniah (Zp) 578
Haggai (Hg) 581
Zechariah (Zc) 584
Malachi (Ml) 595

New Testament

Matthew (Mt) 601
Mark (Mk) 675
Luke (Lk) 704
John (Jn) 756
Acts (At) 818
Romans (Rm) 895
1 Corinthians (1 Co) 946
2 Corinthians (2 Co) 1001
Galatians (Gl) 1028
Ephesians (Ep) 1067
Philippians (Ph) 1093
Colossians (Cl) 1107
1 Thessalonians (1 Th) 1123
2 Thessalonians (2 Th) 1133
1 Timothy (1 Tm) 1142
2 Timothy (2 Tm) 1159
Titus (Ti) 1170
Philemon (Pl) 1177
Hebrews (Hb) .....,.....1180
James (Js) 1215
1 Peter (1 Pt) 1231
2 Peter (2 Pt) 1247
1 John (1 Jn) 1261
2 John (2 Jn) 1281
3 John (3 Jn) 1284
Jude (Jd) 1287
Revelation (Rv) 1294

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide

History Of The Bible 1350

The Bible And Archaeology 1350

The Standard Of The Bible 1356

Jesus The Son Of God 1357

New Testament World Of Jesus 1359

- Political World Of The New Testament 1360
- Religious World Of The New Testament 1363
- Change From Old To The New Covenant 1367

Jesus' Earthly Ministry 1369

Appearances Of Jesus 1372

Introduction To Bible Books 1372

- The Pentateuch 1372
- Return Of The Remnant 1373
- Widsom Literature 1373
- The Major Prophets 1374
- The Minor Prophets 1374
- The Life And Ministry Of Jesus 1375
- History Of The Early Church 1375
- Letters To The Disciples 1375
- Prophecy 1376

Monies, Weights, Times & Measures 1376

Principles In Bible Study 1377

- Nature Of The Old And New Testaments 1377
- Origin Of Sinai Covenant And Law 1378
- Purpose Of Sinai Covenant And Law 1378
- Fulfillment Of Sinai Covenant And Law 1379
- New Covenant And Law 1380
- Superiority Of The New Covenant 1380
- Nature Of The New Covenant And Law 1381
- Authority Of God's Word 1381

State Of The Soul 1382

Survey Of God's Gospel Plan 1383
A Gospel Relationship With God 1384
Gospel Versus Religion 1385

The Body Of Christ 1387

Prophecy And Fulfillment 1387
Revelation Of The Truth Of The Gospel 1391
Identity Of Gospel-Obedient Believers 1392
Gospel Relationship With God 1392
Christian's Relationship With King Jesus 1392
Gospel Reign Of King Jesus 1393
Organic Function Of The Body 1394
Work Of Gospel-Obedient Disciples 1394
Gospel-Motivated Worship 1395
Worship In Spirit And Truth 1397
Fellowship Of The Body 1397
Victory Of The Seedline Wars 1399

Index To Key Bible Studies 1399

Concordance Of Key Subjects 1416

Sharing The Truth Of The Gospel 1421

Understanding The Bible 1424

God Gives Commands 1424
Understanding God's Commands 1426
Direct Commands From God 1428
Examples Of Obedience 1431
Inferred Truth 1435
Figures Of Speech 1436

Judges And Kings Of Israel And Judah 1439

Prophets Of Israel And Judah 1440

Special Occasions 1440

Daily Commentary & Bible Reading 1441

Maps 1442

Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide Index 1446

FROM THE AUTHOR

The initial project of the *Dickson Teacher's Bible Commentary* began in the early 1980s. At that time, only a New Testament edition was envisioned, and subsequently, published in 1987. In the years that followed, I was encouraged by Bible students around the world to add an Old Testament commentary to the mission. Because of the need and encouragement from others, I wrote the Old Testament commentary after the nature of the content of the New Testament commentary.

The comments of both the Old and New Testaments, with the inclusion of the *International King James Version*, was eventually completed, and subsequently published as one volume in 2010. From that year, several editions in different formats have been published and distributed around the world as either printed copies, e-books on the Internet, or as part of the *Biblical Research Library DVD*. This particular 2023 edition is the first published volume to feature only the commentary material, without the inclusion of the text of the *International King James Version*. The recipient of this edition, therefore, must keep in mind that all the quoted references in the text of the commentary are taken from this version of the Bible, though research from other versions of the Bible text is encouraged when using this commentary as a study aid.

This edition of the *Dickson Teacher's Bible Commentary* in one volume is the latest format for the publication and distribution of the commentary material of the original *Dickson Teacher's Bible*. In this edition, I have sought to bring to Bible students around the world my thoughts on the text of the Bible, as well as the topical studies of the *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide*. It is my prayer that this material will encourage and enhance the studies of thousands of dedicated Bible students who have a limited access to Bible study aids. The recipients of this volume should keep in mind that herein are included my personal studies that took place over a period of fifty years, and have been condensed for this volume for the purpose of a greater worldwide audience.

Unique also to this volume is the inclusion of the unabridged edition of the *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide,* portions of which were first published in 1972. The expanded edition of this publication has been added to this volume in order to make this particular volume the best possible aid for Bible preachers and teachers, and especially to facilitate the volume as a textbook for Bible schools. It has also been added in order to provide Bible study material that one would normally receive in a formal Bible educational institution, or from other books that are not commonly available to Bible students around the world. Realizing that most recipients of this volume will never have the opportunity to attend a formal Bible educational institution, or have access to other study aids that are beneficial for Bible study, I have sought in this single volume to bring to Bible students the core of studies that one would receive in studies in a formal educational institution. Because there is a vast audience of people who will never have access to those Bible research books that enhance one's understanding of the Bible, the *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide* has been added in order to give a brief review and study of those Bible subjects that encourage one's appreciation for the Bible, as well as, aid one in preaching and teaching important Bible subjects.

The distribution of the *Dickson Teacher's Bible Commentary* has been a mission project from its inception. Those who have supported the project throughout the development of this volume have dedicated themselves to send a commentary of the entire biblical text, plus Bible study aids, to faithful teachers of the word of God who often live in isolated areas of the world. These faithful servants of God are often working alone in their efforts to maintain the faith through dedicated preaching and teaching of the word of God. By maintaining the publication as a mission effort throughout the years, the result has been that over one million copies of the original *Dickson Teacher's Bible*, either in part or in whole, have been distributed worldwide at the time of the initial publication of the 2023 edition.

This volume is my effort to join the worldwide group of dedicated Bible teachers who seek to follow the mandate of Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2: *"The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* We thus join together as dedicated Bible teachers who seek to teach the word of God to every individual of this world. In a world that is often confused concerning the simplicity of the gospel, which is the theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, I have sought to bring to honest Bible students a study aid that would both enhance and direct Bible studies in the midst of so many confused religious beliefs in this present world. Because of the influence of those who have sought to twist the Scriptures according

to their own agendas, I have sought through the distribution of this volume to present a Bible road map for the thinking of those who are sincere Bible students. It is my prayer, therefore, that the brief commentary statements of this volume, as well as the included *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide,* will aid Bible students to sort through the host of confusing religious teachings that are propagated throughout the religious world.

Because few commentaries of the Bible are distributed to the developing world, I have committed myself to make this volume available to as many people as possible. Though this goal continues to be accomplished through the printed edition of the commentary, the greater circulation of the material has been accomplished in the e-book edition that can be easily downloaded free from my website.

Because printed editions of books are often beyond the financial abilities of those who live in economically depressed areas, I have from the beginning of the project retained the commitment that the *Dickson Teacher's Bible Commentary* should be a mission project for the edification of the disciples of Christ. For this reason, the rights to publish this volume have been secured in a way that this publication should not come under the control of any one individual or publisher, who might in some way hinder the printing and distribution of the volume by any other individual or group who would also seek to make the volume available to a wider audience. This volume was produced because of the sacrifices of those who desire to distribute a commentary of the entire Bible to as many people as possible. As long as there are financial means, therefore, the *Dickson Teacher's Bible Commentary* will continue to be produced and distributed to as many people as possible, either in printed editions, or through the free distribution of the e-book edition on the website.

As the author of the content of both the *Teacher's Bible Commentary* and the *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide*, it is my desire to encourage others to likewise make this volume available to as many people as possible through every available means. Those who seek to print for themselves this volume in partnership with other worldwide distributors, have the opportunity to support financially themselves the cost of both printing and distribution. In this way there will be a host of publishers in several countries who work in partnership with one another in order to make this volume available in the years to come.

If there are those who would seek to print only individual books of this volume, or make translations of portions of the contents, they have the right to do so in order to bring the contents of what I have written to a greater audience.

Therefore, the policy of publication, distribution or translation does not restrict anyone from publishing this volume as a financial venture in order to pay for the cost of printing and distribution in their particular country. Others have the right to print and distribute the volume, such as bookstores or publishing houses. Permission is granted to these institutions to print and sell the *Dickson Teacher's Bible Commentary* in order to make the volume available to a greater audience of people, though no one publisher is allowed to claim the sole rights of printing, selling or distribution.

It has always been my desire that the *Dickson Teacher's Bible Commentary*, as well as the *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide*, never be used as the final authority in matters of opinion or Bible interpretation. Those matters of truth that are fundamental to salvation need no interpretation, for matters of salvation come to us from God through declarative statements or imperative commands of His word.

The purpose for the distribution of this volume is to provide basic concepts upon which Bible believers can grow in their personal knowledge of the word of God. By presenting to Bible students key concepts, it is expected that those who love the word of God will be inspired to grow to a more rewarding understanding of all Bible subjects.

There is no final authority in matters of faith other than the Bible. When using this volume in teaching, therefore, I would urge teachers that they use the material herein included simply as another resource that will enhance Bible study, while remembering that the individual Bible student must use the Bible alone as the final source upon which one's faith is built. This volume is only one effort to encourage faithful teachers to grow in a greater knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel He introduced into this world.

Roger E. Dickson
Philadelphia, South Africa
Hutchinson, Kansas, U.S.A.
www.roger–e–dickson.org
2023

Genesis

WRITER

Moses is given credit for being guided by the Holy Spirit to write this first book of the Bible (Lk 24:44; Jn 7:19-23). He was born in Egypt (Ex 2:1,2) to the Hebrew slave parents of Amram and Jochebed (Ex 6:20). His brother was Aaron and his sister was Miriam. Soon after his birth, he was placed in a basket in the Nile River by his mother in order to save his life from Pharaoh's efforts to kill the Hebrews' newborn male babies. He was found by Pharaoh's daughter, and subsequently adopted and brought up in Pharaoh's house (Ex 2:3-10). As he grew up, he was instructed in the wisdom and culture of the Egyptians (At 7:22).

After killing an Egyptian in defense of a fellow Hebrew, Moses fled to Midian. He spent forty years in Midian (Ex 2:15; 7:30), where he married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian (Ex 2:21; 18:2). When he was eighty years old, God called him on Mount Sinai in order to give him a mandate to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and to the promised land of Canaan (Ex 12:29-51; 14:1-31).

Once the Hebrews were safely out of Egypt and at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses received the ten commandment law from God on the mountain (Ex 20:1-20; 21). Afterward, he led Israel through forty years of wilderness wanderings. During this time he was directed by God to write the Pentateuch, the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (See Ps 90).

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and at the time Israel was about to go into the land of promise, God informed Moses that he would not be allowed to enter the land. He was not allowed because of an act of disobedience in the wilderness (See Nm 20:10-13; 27:12-14). Before Israel crossed the Jordan into the promised land, Moses died at the age of 120, and was buried by God somewhere in the land of Moab (Dt 34:5-8; see Jd 9).

BOOK

The Jews entitled this book according to the first word of the book. In this case, the book was named, "In the beginning." It was later called the "Book of the Creation of the World" by those who were influenced by the writings of the Talmud. The name "Genesis" comes from the Septuagint in the translation of the Greek word *geneseos* in Genesis 2:4, *"This is the book of the* geneseos *of heaven and earth"* (See 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1,9; 37:2). Genesis means "origin," "source," "generations" or "beginnings."

Genesis was written somewhere between 1400 and 1440 B.C. The book was part of what the Jews called the Torah. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint, referred to the first five books of the Bible as the Pentateuch.

Genesis covers at least 2,500 years of the major events of human history. The book was not meant to be chronicles of all human history. It was written to be a record of specific events and personalities that played a special role in God's eternal plan to redeem man. Genesis reveals the beginning of human history, and then it gives us a historical background of origins and the initial work of God to preserve a culture of people, the children of Israel, for the eventual revelation of the Son of God. The book concludes with the dwelling of the children of Israel in Egypt.

The Generations Of The Creation
(1:1 - 2:3)

Outline: (1) Creation of light (1:1-5), (2) Creation of the firmament (1:6-8), (3) Creation of land, vegetation and light (1:9-13), (4) Creation of heavenly bodies (1:14-19), (5) Creation of birds and fish (1:20-23), (6) Creation of animals and man (1:24-31), Rest on the seventh day (2:1-3)

Chapter 1
CREATION OF LIGHT

Though we do not understand how creation can take place, we are informed in Hebrews 11:3 that creation took place by bringing something into existence that previously did not exist. The integrity of Jesus stands on the fact of His confirmation that He was part of the Godhead who created man and woman (1:26; see Mt 19:4; Cl 1:16).

1:1-3 ***In the beginning:*** The incarnate Word was in the beginning when all things were created because He was the one who did the creating (Jn 1:1; Cl 1:16; see Ps 104; Pv 3:19). ***God:*** This is the strong and Almighty One, the eternal existence of the One who is to be feared. The word here is from *Elohim*, which is plural and used approximately 2,000

times in the Old Testament. ***Created:*** The word here is *bara* that is used exclusively by God in calling something into existence out of nothing. *Yatzar* (formed) (2:7,19; Ps 33:15; Is 44:9,10) and *asah* (made) (8:6; Ex 5:16; Dt 4:16) refer to the reconstruction of that which is already created. ***Heavens and earth:*** Heavens refer to the galaxies of all suns, moons and stars. Earth refers to that on which man resides (2:1; 14:19,22; Jr 23:24). ***Was:*** This should not be understood to mean "had become." Reference is to a state of being or existence. ***Without form and void:*** The earth was created a wasteland of soil mixed with water (See Is 34:11; Jr 4:23 where the words are used in reference to desolation.) ***Let there be ... and there was ...:*** What else would we expect from God (See Ps 33:9). Since God is defined by what He can do in creation, then certainly He has no need to rely on some supposed evolutionary process to bring the present forms of life into existence.

1:4 ***It was good:*** The sovereign Creator is magnified at least six times in the creation account with the statement, "It was good." The creating *Elohim* (God) spoke the word, and it came into existence. The galaxies were spoken into existence by Him who only is eternal. This sober fact of history thus becomes the foundation of our belief that we are the result of a creative God of all things. In our interpretation of these things we must keep in mind that Moses did not commence here with a book on science. However, when he speaks of those things that are scientific, there is no contradiction between true science and the speculations of men who have allowed themselves to be misguided by the false postulations of false science. That men somehow evolved from slime to the sublime is totally foreign to the Genesis account of beginnings.

1:5 ***Day:*** It must be pointed out that the word *yom* (day) with a numeral adjective signifies a 24-hour day. Of the 1,284 times this word is used in the Old Testament there are only a few exceptions when it does not signify a 24-hour day when the numerical adjective is not used. The plural form *yamin* always refers to a 24-hour day (See Ex 20:11). If God is who the Bible describes Him to be, then certainly He has the power to create and the power to create in a single moment.

CREATION OF THE FIRMAMENT

1:6-8 ***Expanse:*** The KJV used the word "firmament." The expanse stood between the canopy of waters that was above the earth and the waters of the earth that had been separated from the soil, but retained in the "fountains of the deep" (7:11). The consequence was a greenhouse effect that caused the global warmth of a tropical environment for the development of lush vegetation over the face of the earth. Because of this global warmth, we must assume that the nature of the environment of the world before the flood of Noah's day, the time when the waters above the expanse ("firmament") were brought down to the surface of the earth through forty days of rain, was much different than the first days after the creation.

CREATION OF LAND, VEGETATION, LIGHT

1:9-19 ***Lights:*** Light was created on the first day. However, the heavenly bodies that generate light were created on day four. Light does not depend on the existence of a material substance such as the sun. On this fourth day God created the lights (sun, moon, stars) in order to divide day and night for the sake of man.

CREATION OF BIRDS & FISH

1:20-23 ***Creatures that have life:*** The Hebrew text reads "souls that have life." It is not that they have souls as man, but that the birds are living creatures. ***Fly:*** The realm of their flight defines the firmament. This is the sky which existed before the flood. It existed between the canopy of water above the sky and the earth below. In our world today, the canopy of waters above the sky no longer exists because it was brought down to the earth during the flood of Noah's day. The sky still exists wherein the birds fly, but there is no canopy of waters between the sky and outer space. ***Great creatures:*** From this statement we must assume that all life that was created for the sea came into existence. This would include sea life that no longer exists, but has been preserved in fossils throughout the world. God created more life in the sea than the life that now exists. From His work of creation, all dinosaurs were created, both those that walked on the land and those that lived in the sea. The fossils of dinosaurs are evidence of the tremendous work of God in creation.

CREATION OF ANIMALS & MAN

1:24-31 ***Image of God:*** Man is thus created after the spiritual image of God (1:26). The nature of God is beyond the definitions of the words of our dictionary, which words are defined by human relationships, experiences and physical appearances. Throughout the Bible, therefore, the Holy Spirit used many anthropomorphisms (physical features of man) to explain metaphorically the actions and being of God. It is stated that God "sees" and "breathes." But God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and thus is not confined to human actions and appearances. Creation in the image of God does not refer to a physical appearance. Reference is to the spiritual image of God that dwells within every person through the God-created spirit of man. Being in the image of God refers to the spiritual inclinations of man that make him a spiritual being who seeks to worship a higher power than himself.

Chapter 2

REST ON THE SEVENTH DAY

2:1-3 ***Rested:*** God "rested" on the seventh day (2:2). But God does not become tired as man. The meaning is that He ceased (rested) from His work of creation. This must be kept in mind when understanding the concept that we are created after the image of God. Reference is not to a physical image, but a spiritual image, otherwise, the Son of God would not have experienced the incarnation (Jn 1:14). We are created after the image of the Creator who is spirit. Because we are so created, all men have a natural yearning to that which is beyond the spiritual (See comments At 17:22-31). ***Sanctified it:*** It is not that He made it a day of worship. He simply set it apart as a day of rest. Men were to work six days and rest on the seventh (Ex 20:11; see 23:12; Dt 5:12-14). Many physical

things were sanctified throughout the Old Testament. In the sanctification, they were not meant to be objects of worship, but were set apart for spiritual purposes.

Generations Of The Heavens & The Earth
(2:4 - 4:26)

Outline: (1) Beginning of mankind (2:4-25), (2) Beginning of sin (3:1-7), (3) Beginning of the seedline promise (3:8-24), (4) Beginning of the families of mankind (4:1-15), (5) Beginning of the fall of man (4:16-26)

BEGINNING OF MANKIND

2:4 ***History:*** The word "generations" in the context of Genesis refers to what is begotten or generated. In this book it is the generations of key people through whom the seedline promise of redemption would come. Since it is the purpose of the writer to give an account of origins, the book is conveniently divided into sections by an introduction that alerts us to the beginning of a new section by mentioning the beginning of a new posterity. Ten times the writer introduces a section with the statement, ***"These are the generations ..."*** (See 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,9; 37:2). Beginning with this section, man is the offspring who came from the creation of the heavens and the earth, since from the dust of the earth the body of man was formed. Beginning with 2:4, Moses does not present a second account of creation, but focuses on the created heavens and earth giving birth to the human race. For this reason, chapter 2 is not chronological in reference to chapter 1. It is topical in presenting the fall of man in chapter 3. We must not, therefore, read any contradictions between the narratives of chapters 1 and 2. The creation of chapter 1 climaxed with the creation of man. Chapter 2 prepares the reader with added details in the creation of man in preparation for the fall of man into sin in chapter 3. ***The Lord God made:*** We must not make the error of assuming that the record of the early beginnings of all things is either myth or legend. Though a speaking snake is somewhat unusual, we must remember that God is working in this event before the fall of man. Since the record is not written as either myth or legend, then we must accept it as the revelation of God concerning our beginnings. It is reasonable to believe that if God exists, and He does, then certainly He would reveal to us how we and all creation came into existence. We must also assume, that if there is a God, then the very nature of God is that He can create. Creation, therefore, is the proof that there is a God. Every phenomenon of the creation is a witness to the fact that God exists and that He has the power to create. ***Lord God:*** In contrast to the names that were given to pagan gods, this new name in reference to the Eternal Creator is *Jehovah Elohim*. Jehovah, which is translated from various forms of the original Hebrew word, has long since lost its correct pronunciation. The original word used here could have been from either *Jahovah*, *Yahweh* or *Yeheveh*. It is commonly translated "Jehovah." But because of the variation in spelling, many translations have simply translated with the word "LORD," with the letters in all capitals. When Moses asked who sent him to Israel in Egypt, God told him to identify Him to Israel as, *"I AM THAT I AM"* (Ex 3:14). Only with man would God carry a true name among so many idolatrous gods that have been created after the imagination of man.

2:5,6 ***Rain:*** These statements must be understood in reference to a different environment than that which we experience today. There was an "expanse" (firmament) created between the waters of the earth and the canopy of waters above the earth (1:6). The canopy of waters above the earth produced a greenhouse effect that created a warm temperature throughout the world, and thus lush vegetation grew over all the surface of the earth before the flood of Noah's day. It is probable that rain did not occur before the flood of Noah's day, and thus some had a difficult time believing the prophecy of Noah that a great destruction by water was coming. In this context we learn that vegetation throughout the world was watered by a mist that came up from the earth. The lush global vegetation made it possible for animal life throughout the world to exist in great abundance.

2:7 ***Breath of Life:*** This was not a time when man supposedly changed from being an evolved animal to being a *homo sapien*. Man was created instantly. He immediately became a "living soul," and thus is different from the nature of animals. Man is similar to animals only in the sense that he was created with a body that could exist in the same physical environment as animals. Animals were commanded into existence by the infinite power of Deity, whereas the body of man was made from that which was already created (dust). Man was brought to life by the personal act of God breathing life into him. Thus man is not an advanced form of any animal.

2:8,9 ***Garden:*** See 1 Kg 21:2; Is 51:3; Jl 2:3. ***Eastward in Eden:*** The garden was in the eastward part of Eden. It was the "garden of Eden" only in that it was in Eden, the paradise of God. Eden was more than the garden wherein God located man. ***Tree of life:*** Eating from this tree would somehow give eternal life to man (See Gn 3:22-24). ***Tree of the knowledge of good and evil:*** Eating from this tree would bring the curse of death, both spiritually and physically (vs 17; see comments Rm 5:12; 1 Co 15:20-22). It would be spiritual death in that man would be separated from his Creator, who only is eternal. It would be physical death in that man would not have an opportunity to eat of the tree of life, for man was driven from the garden after eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

2:10-14 ***Pishon ... Gihon ... Tigris ... Euphrates:*** The names of these rivers are given in order to identify the location of the part of Eden in which man dwelt. The Tigris would be identified as the Hiddekel. We do not know the location of the Pishon and Gihon. But according to our present understanding of where both the Tigris and Euphrates are located, we would assume that the Genesis writer wants us to understand that the area about which he is discussing is somewhere in the upper Mesopotamian area.

2:15-17 With every opportunity for good, there comes an opportunity for sin. Since man was created a free-moral agent with the ability to choose, he could be truly free only if he was placed in an environment wherein he could make choices. Thus the garden of Eden offered man the opportunity to choose between good and evil. Some might question why God placed the opportunity for sin in the presence of Adam and Eve. The

answer is in the fact that God is love. God says to man that He loves him. But only a truly free-moral agent can sincerely respond with the statement, "I love you, too." Neither robots, nor free-moral agents who do not have the opportunity to rebel, can respond to a loving God with a sincere statement as, "I love you, too." The tree of the knowledge of good and evil had to exist within the environment of man in order for man to be identified as a true moral being with the ability to choose sin.

2:18-25 ***Suitable helper:*** The woman was to be a helper in answer to the loneliness of man, and thus a partner and companion in life. Man had a social need that could not be satisfied by any animal. For this reason God created woman to fill his need for companionship. The fact that man is not as animals is thus illustrated in the fact that Adam found no true companionship among the animals. For companionship that was equal with man, God had to create a helper who was suitable for him. And in order for man to find true companionship in woman, she had to be created with the same nature and intellect as man. True companionship could never have existed if woman were in any way created inferior to man. ***Names:*** Adam was given authority to name the animals. Adam did not evolve from animals, but was given dominion over all animals. His superiority over animals was manifested in the fact that his spiritual and intellectual nature after the image of God allowed him the ability to give names to the animals.

Chapter 3

BEGINNING OF SIN

3:1-5 ***You will not surely die:*** This is the first recorded lie of human history, and thus Satan identifies his deceiving nature (Jn 8:44). By appealing to the command of God that man be dominant over all the animals, Satan tempts man with being a god who is dominant over all things. *"Your eyes will then be opened"* is Satan's temptation that they would attain a higher degree of perception or awareness that is typical of the gods that men create after their own imagination (See 21:19; Is 35:5). It was not that they would be gods, but that they would have a greater awareness of their relationship with God.

3:6,7 Satan appealed to Eve's lust of the flesh (*"the tree was good for food"*), lust of the eyes (*"pleasant to the eyes"*), and pride of life (*"desired to make one wise"*) (1 Jn 2:16). The temptation resulted in her action to commit the sin (Js 1:15). The free moral agents were placed in an environment wherein they could be tempted because there was an opportunity to sin. Eve leaves her submission to her husband and made the fatal choice without the initial advice of her head (1 Tm 2:14). However, Adam is guilty because he yielded to the example of his wife to sin (Rm 5:12; 1 Co 15:21,22). He did not take the moral initiative to do that which was right. As a result of their sin, their eyes were opened to understand that they were no longer innocent, but were standing naked before one another (See Ex 32:25; Ez 16:22; Rv 3:17). Their one act of sin introduced sin into the world. As the representative for humanity, Adam brought sin into the world (Rm 5:12). All men personally sin and are separated from God because of the sin of each person (Rm 3:9,10,23; 6:23). Sin has passed to all men because all men personally sin against God.

BEGINNING OF THE SEEDLINE PROMISE

3:8-10 Because of guilt, Adam and Eve hid themselves from a visual presentation of God. God called to Adam, not because He did not know where Adam was, but to bring forth a confession of what he had done. Adam's fear when God approached manifested that separation had now come between God and man as a result of sin (Is 59:1,2).

3:11-13 Adam had known the command not to eat of the tree (2:15-17), and thus he was without excuse. However, he would not take ownership of his own sin. He shifted the responsibility to his wife. And in stating that it was God who created the woman, he was seeking to shift responsibility back to God. Then Eve also sought to shift responsibility to the serpent, making it seem that the serpent played her for a fool. The fact is that the soul that sins will spiritually die (Ez 18:20).

3:14 The extent of the sin is here revealed by the intensity of the punishments that were issued by God. The fact that the serpent's curse was more than the rest of the animals assumes that all animals were in some way cursed as a result of the sin. But the curse of the serpent was humiliating, for he was given the lowest status of life among all creatures (See Ps 72:9; Is 49:23; Mc 7:17).

3:15 Paul's reference to the crushing of Satan surely refers to this first prophecy of the future work of Jesus to rectify what was here lost in the garden in Eden (Rm 16:20). From the time of this first sin, the curse was that there would be hostility (enmity) between the offspring of Satan (see Mt 13:38,39; Jn 8:44), and the eventual offspring of woman, the Redeemer. Nevertheless, the Seed of woman (Jesus) would eventually crush the head of Satan by His death on the cross, thus freeing man from the control that Satan has over man through sin. In crushing the head of Satan on the cross, Jesus would bruise His heel by His own death. However, His heal would only be bruised because He would be raised from the dead. The Bible student must keep in mind that beginning with the seed of woman in this context, to the time of the cross of Jesus, Satan launched an attack to destroy the seed of woman that would eventually lead to the Seed who would give His life for the sins of all men (See comments Gl 3:16). Satan would make every effort to destroy that which would eventually lead to his own destruction (Mt 25:41). The seedline war of Satan against the seed of women would become so intense that at one time in human history, almost all humanity was wiped from the face of the earth in the days of Noah. Nevertheless, the seedline from Eve would prevail. From the seed of woman would eventually come the Seed of woman into the world for the salvation of man.

3:16 Eve, as the mother of womanhood, brought upon herself and her posterity quite the opposite of what she sought in verse 6. Her disobedience brought sorrow in childbearing. For her presumptuous act without following the headship of her husband, her desire would always be to the man who would rule over her.

3:17,18 Man had been given the responsibility to work the soil (2:5), but now after the curse, the work would no longer be a joy. By cursing the earth, the fruit of the soil would come forth only as a result of the intense labor of man. Thorns and

thistles would be his enemy in receiving the fruit of his labors.

3:19 Though not immediate at the time of the sin, physical death would be the second greatest problem of mankind after his spiritual separation from God by sin. For his sin, Adam immediately suffered the guilt of his sin, for he was spiritually separated from God (Is 59:1,2; Rm 5:12). For his sin, he would also suffer the consequence of physical death, since he would be driven from the tree of life (3:22; 1 Co 15:20-22). Because he could not eat of the tree of life, the natural processes of his body growing old would continue until he physically died.

3:20,21 There was hope of a posterity through Eve ("life"), since she, through childbearing, would be the one through whom humanity would be preserved. The coats of skins meant that some animal had to die in order to rectify the nakedness of man. And from this time on we would assume that animals were commissioned to die in sacrifices for the sins of men until the final death for all sin on the cross of calvary (Rm 3:25; compare Hb 10:1-4).

3:22-24 ***Has become like one of Us:*** It was not that man became in nature and character as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It was only that man learned the guilt and consequence of rebellion against divine law that only God can establish. Lest men have the opportunity to live perpetually in rebellion against God, his opportunity for eternal life on earth had to be taken from him. He was thus driven from Eden in order to be responsible for his own existence through the cultivation of the ground. Angelic beings (cherubim) were set in place in order to guarantee that no man would have the opportunity of partaking of the tree of life. All men, therefore, must now physically die because they cannot eat of the tree of life (Hb 9:27).

Chapter 4

BEGINNING OF FAMILIES OF MANKIND

4:1,2 We do not know if Eve believed that she fulfilled the promise of 3:15 by giving birth to her firstborn, Cain. It was with the "help of the Lord" that she affirmed the continuation of humanity, regardless of the sin in Eden. Cain and Abel were quite different in their temperaments. Cain liked farming. Abel liked shepherding the animals.

4:3-5 Both sons were religious, and thus brought forth to the Lord the fruit of their labors. It was not that firstlings of the flock were superior to the offering of the fields. Abel's sacrifice was more excellent in that it had been commanded by the Lord, which command is not here stated in the text, but assumed from the statement of Hebrews 11:4. The offerings thus manifested the character of the two sons. Abel's was out of faith because he did what God commanded, whereas Cain's was out of selfish ambition and rebellion, which is subsequently manifested in what follows in the text.

4:6-8 Cain's countenance had fallen in his anger because he knew that he had not acted according to the will of God. His knowledge of his sin assumes his knowledge of what God had originally commanded concerning acceptable sacrifices. Sin was in the heart of Cain, and thus he could not keep the door of sin shut. He allowed it to open, and in doing so, the opportunity presented itself to act in a murderous manner toward his brother. His action was deliberate and without provocation. It was murder in the first degree.

4:9-12 The brotherhood of civilization can exist only in the fact that we are our brother's keeper. By his murderous act of terrorism against his brother, Cain denied the very foundation upon which civilized men can cohabit in the world. His privileges of bringing forth fruit from the ground are thus taken away. He would become a fugitive from society and a vagabond in restlessly wandering from place to place. The word "fugitive," and the phrase "whoever finds me" (vs 14), here indicate that Adam and Eve were bearing other children before and at the time of this tragedy. We do not know how long it was after their birth when Cain killed Abel. But judging from the age of Adam and Eve, it could have been hundreds of years. During this time Adam and Eve gave birth to many sons and daughters, who also gave birth to countless children who were populating the earth. We must not assume by the time of this act of murder, therefore, that only Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel existed on the face of the earth. Because the narrative mentions only these personalities does not mean that they only lived on the earth at the time the events took place.

4:13-15 When faced with accountability, hate will always turn to fear and self-pity. God's mercy is shown in the fact that their sudden death did not take place as a result of Cain's murderous act. Cain's punishment was merciful in the fact that he was not immediately struck dead. It was serious, however, in the fact that he was allowed to live out his punishment as an aimless wanderer among humanity. The "land of Nod" was not a specific location, but a general area east of Eden where Cain wandered among other descendants of Adam and Eve.

BEGINNING OF THE FALL OF MAN

4:16-24 By implication, the wife of Cain was a near relative with the other "sons and daughters" of Adam and Eve (5:4). From this genealogy the wickedness of men developed upon the face of the earth. Through polygamous marriages men began to multiply rapidly. They learned skills for the development of society. However, an apostasy from God developed as the center of reference for moral behavior in society turned from the laws of God to men. Man started doing that which pleased the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and what manifested pride in life. This moral degradation is illustrated in the act of Lamech who killed simply because someone wounded him (vs 23). Though mankind reached heights in achieving great things, he sunk into the depths of sin. Economic development never assumes moral allegiance to the will of God.

4:25,26 The word "again" does not indicate that this was only the third time Adam had either laid with his wife, or the third time she conceived. It simply means that he had sexual intercourse with his wife again in order to conceive a son to carry on the righteousness that was characteristic of Abel. The name "Seth" means "appointed" or "placed." Since Abel was the child who was appointed to bring into the world a posterity of faith among men, Seth was to be his successor. The poster-

ity of Cain was evil. But the posterity of Seth was that faith in God would continue among people throughout the history of the world. Regardless of how evil people would become, there would always be those who lived by faith.

The Generations Of Adam
(5:1 - 6:8)

Outline: (1) Righteous descendants from Seth (5:1-32), (2) Moral degradation of humanity (6:1-8)

Chapter 5
RIGHTEOUS DESCENDANTS FROM SETH

5:1-32 The first two verses of this chapter are a review of 1:27,28. After the history of the genealogy of Cain, wherein men digressed into habitual sin, the Genesis writer wants us to understand that God originally intended that men live after the spiritual image of God. This image would move man to focus on the spiritual, not the physical. Moses in this context brings to the forefront the behavior of Enoch who walked with God (24) as opposed to those who rebelled against God.

There are interpretative principles that must be kept in mind when studying the genealogies of the Old and New Testaments. The genealogies are usually selective in the sense that every person of the ancestry is not necessarily mentioned. The words "father" and "son" apply to any ancestor of a particular lineage, and thus at times a person of a genealogy is left out. For this reason, the genealogies are not meant to be strict chronologies of an ancestry, but to give the general lineage of the individual's descendants.

Since the genealogical records of Genesis 5 and 11, in comparison with Matthew 1 and Luke 3, leave out some generations, we would assume that we cannot use the genealogies as chronologies to determine the time of creation in reference to the birth of Jesus. We would assume that since generations were left out of the genealogies, that the creation took place further in the past than the years that are listed in the chronologies of Genesis. How many years in the past cannot be determined by the years of the generations that are listed in the Genesis chronologies.

What is revealed in a comparison between the genealogy of Cain and Seth is that the descendants of Cain moved their ancestors into wickedness, whereas the genealogy of Seth eventually descended to Enoch who walked with God and Noah who was righteous before God (29). It was through righteous Noah that God would begin the existence of man anew after the flood with a genealogy of men of faith.

The length of the lives of those mentioned in this chapter have often been questioned. However, we must keep in mind that before the flood of Noah's day, the atmosphere and physical environment of the world was very different than what we experience today. It is believed by most biblical scientists that the earth was encompassed by a water vapor that protected man from the damaging ultra violet rays of the sun, thus giving the earth a universal warm climate.

One of the negative aspects of the longevity of mankind was that the wickedness of particularly evil men had a long lasting impact on society. As a result, every imagination of man became continually evil (6:5). This is the lesson that Moses wants us to understand as we move into the narrative concerning the flood of Noah's era. Moses wants us to understand the lesson of the digression of mankind into wickedness in order that we guard ourselves from such in our own societies.

Chapter 6
MORAL DEGRADATION OF HUMANITY

Studies in the general rate of population growth, figuring in wars and famines, indicate that the present population of the world began about 3,000 to 4,000 B.C. We would place the time of the beginning of the population of the world from Noah to at least 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. Some have suggested a time from 7,000 to 8,000 years ago according to present population growth figures. This would place the creation of the world further back in history to possibly beyond 8,000 years ago, depending on the amount of time we would calculate that transpired between Adam and Noah.

6:1-4 We cannot interpret that the "sons of God" were fallen heavenly beings who were incarnate in order to corrupt humanity by marrying women of this world. We must keep in mind that angels are without sexual orientation (Mt 22:30). As in Psalm 73:15 ("the generation of your children") and Deuteronomy 32:5 ("his children"), the reference is to the spiritual "sons of the living God" (Hs 1:10). These were those who were obedient to God. They joined themselves to those who were not of faith (the daughters of men), and thus allowed themselves to be led away into degradation. ***My Spirit will not always contend:*** God thus established a deadline that would end His contending (strife) with those who would totally corrupt the world, knowing that a seedline of faith had to be preserved for the coming Seed of woman (Gl 3:16). ***Nephilim:*** The word "giants" in some translations is from the Hebrew word nephilim. Reference is not to men of stature, but to those who are either "fallen ones" or those who fall upon others. They were a vicious and dominant people who subjugated civilizations by populating the earth through the "daughters of men," and thus bringing wickedness upon the earth. The result of their wicked culture led to the digression of mankind.

6:5-8 Humanity had reached the point of no return. Degradation was the norm of social behavior, and thus, society was beyond repentance and in a state of self-destruction. God's "repentance" ("sorrow") was not as men who would repent of evil deeds. God does not repent as men (Nm 23:19; 1 Sm 15:29). When man turns from the path that God intended that he should go down, then God changes His relationship with man. As repentance means to change one's course of behavior, so God changes His course from a loving protector of man to a God of rebuke and judgment. In this context God sorrowed over the creation of man because He now had to change His relationship with man to one of destruction in the flood that was to come. The result of God's love, the creation of man, must now reap the consequences of His judgment. The purpose for which man was created, that is, to populate heaven, had now failed in humanity. However, Noah found favor with

God because of his obedient faith. God would continue the seed promise of Genesis 3:15 through the seedline of Noah.

Generations Of Noah
(6:9 - 9:29)

Outline: (1) Noah commissioned to build ark (6:9-22), (2) God's judgment by the global flood (7:1-24), (3) Noah's deliverance from the flood (8:1-19), (4) Noah coming out of the ark (8:20-22), (5) God's covenant with humanity (9:1-17), (6) The sin and curse of Ham and Canaan (9:18-29)

NOAH COMMISSIONED TO BUILD ARK

This section of Scripture is written to give an account of what God did in human history to preserve mankind in view of what had happened to society as a whole. His preservation of humanity came through His salvation of Noah and his generations. Since man had moved into a behavior of self-destruction (vs 5), God changed His preserving relationship of love to an appointed time of destruction. Because of his righteousness, Noah was chosen, not only to preserve mankind, the creation of God, but also to preserve the seedline through which the Savior of the world would redeem those as Noah who continued to walk by faith.

6:9,10 Noah was just in that he lived according to the standard of God's law. He was blameless in his uncompromising loyalty to God. As with Enoch (5:24), he enjoyed a close fellowship with God because of his obedience to the will of God.

6:11,12 In contrast to the character and behavior of Noah who had a genuine faith and obedient behavior, the rest of society had given up moral guidance. Society lived in a state of violence of one man against another. It was thus a state of social self-destruction. As God "looked on" this situation (compare 30:1,9; 50:15), action had to be taken, lest righteous Noah be consumed in the degradation of mankind, and the foreordained plan of God to save the righteous be cancelled by the total destruction of humanity.

6:13 The "end of all flesh" had come. This judgment in time would typify the judgment of God on the Jewish State in A.D. 70 (Jd 14,15) and the final judgment at the end of time (See 2 Pt 3). We must not conclude that this was to be a local flood in the region of Noah's dwelling. Phrases as "all flesh" strongly indicate that this flood would be universal, for man had universally become corrupt and violent. If it were only a local flood, then the corrupt and violent nature of a neighboring society would eventually overtake Noah's generations, and thus another man as Noah would have to be called to preserve again a generation of faith. If it were only a local flood, then certainly God would have instructed Noah to simply migrate to another area.

6:14-16 It is not known for sure what gopher wood was, but some translators assume it was acacia wood. With asphalt (tarmac) as a sealant, the boxlike shape of the ark would be perfect as a floating barn. It would be the ideal floating habitat for every kind of animal with genes that would populate the world with every species now known to man. With eighteen inches being the assumed length of a cubit, the ark would have been 450 feet long (about 139 meters), 75 feet wide (about 23 meters), and 45 feet high (about 14 meters). For ventilation and light, there was a window that may have encompassed the top edge of the ark. A door was on the side of the ark, though no information is given concerning the relationship of the door to the three levels of the ark.

6:17,18 The interpretation of the words that are used to describe the flood clearly indicate that the flood was a global catastrophe. It was to be such in order to guarantee the total annihilation of humanity, except for Noah and his immediate family. A covenant is thus established with Noah as a promise of God that he would not be destroyed (9:9-17). This is the first time the word "covenant" is used in Scripture. It here means a promise that God extends to Noah and his family that is based on the condition that Noah build the ark.

6:19-22 The word "kind" in the classification of animals has no equivalent in modern science (See 1:21,24,25). It would be erroneous to associate the "kinds" of the account here with the modern scientific classification of species, since it would not be reasonable that ancient civilizations would use modern definitions to identify animals. "Male and female" of every kind were to be taken for the purpose of starting the repopulating of the animal kingdom after the flood. Because of his faith, Noah moved with fear to be obedient to everything that God had commanded (Hb 11:7). And while carrying out what he had been commanded to do, he preached to his generation in order that God's opportunity for salvation be extended to others (2 Pt 2:5). Noah built in hope that possibly others would join him in the ark in order to be preserved from the impending flood judgment to come. Regardless of his almost one hundred years of preaching while the ark was under construction, he had not one convert other than his wife, sons and their wives (Compare 1 Pt 3:18-22).

Chapter 7
GOD'S JUDGMENT BY THE GLOBAL FLOOD

7:1 We must keep in mind that the coming of the Lord to speak again to Noah to enter the ark is about one hundred years after the initial commandment to build the ark. Throughout this time, Noah preached the righteousness of God while building on the ark (1 Pt 3:18-20; compare Jd 14,15). We often wonder what mocking he had to endure as he spoke of a global flood that would come and destroy the face of the earth. His faith is exemplified in the fact that he preached something that had never before happened in the history of the world.

7:2-5 It was now time to enter the ark, and thus God reminded Noah concerning the animals that were to be taken into the ark. The "clean" animals were to come in by sevens in order to reproduce after the flood in greater numbers. These were the animals that were to be used for animal sacrifices. Of the unclean animals, only pairs were to be taken. Noah was given seven days to complete the task of bringing the animals into the ark.

7:6-10 In order to expedite the work of bringing all the animals into the ark, God brought the animals to Noah and his three sons. At the end of the seven days, it started to rain. The first drop of rain marked the time for the waters to be upon the face of the earth, and thus change the history of mankind and the surface of the world.

7:11,12 The subterranean waters of the earth were unleashed upon the face of the earth. The watery canopy above the firmament was brought down upon the earth in a torrential rain. This cataclysmic activity produced tectonic activity that changed the entire face of the earth. Because few statements are made about what geologically happened, some assume that the flood was a local washout. But we must remember that the Bible was not written as a textbook on geology. Because of the present geological phenomena we see throughout the world today, we can conclude that the global geological upheaval that took place during the flood was truly catastrophic. The world that existed was overthrown by water (2 Pt 3:5,6).

7:13-16 To emphasize the preservation that existed inside the ark, Genesis again records the entrance of all those who would be saved from the global destruction that would take place outside the ark. Emphasis is on the fact that the Lord shut them in, and thus those who would be preserved were sealed in by the Lord. Those who were destroyed were shut out by the Lord.

7:17-20 The increasing of the waters meant that the event was cataclysmic for forty days and nights. The waters "prevailed" exceedingly upon the earth in that they worked to change the appearance of the face of the earth. The word "prevailed" signifies that the waters took control over the soil, and thus moved the soil to and fro in order to resurface the earth. In order to affirm that the waters prevailed upon and over all the earth, we are informed that the waters rose to over twenty-two feet (about 6.8 meters) above the highest mountain.

7:21-24 In order to emphasize the universality of the flood, the Holy Spirit uses the word "all" in reference to both animals and mankind. Every animal and every man of all the earth was destroyed by the global waters. The resurfacing of the earth carried on for 150 days. It was during this time that the face of the earth was changed to be as it is today. It is significant to understand what the Holy Spirit said of this event in 2 Peter 3:5,6. *"For this they willfully forget, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, through which the world that then existed was destroyed, being overflowed with water."* In the context of 2 Peter 3, Peter compares the heavens and earth of old with the *"heavens and the earth that are now"* (2 Pt 3:7). Though we do not know all the details, we do know that we now live in a different physical world than the world that existed before the flood. Therefore, we can assume many things in reference to how the Genesis flood changed the physical and biological environment of the world. Some of the changes that took place would be the formation of the frozen north and south poles after the flood, since before the flood the watery canopy above the firmament would have produced a greenhouse effect that brought warmth throughout the world. The world before the flood was lush with vegetation and animal life. During the flood, all animals and vegetation were compacted into enormous subterranean pockets that were compressed into the coal beds and oil cavities of the present earth. After the flood, the phenomenon of rain appeared, for the subterranean waters of the earth no longer came up from the ground as a mist to water the earth as in the days of the garden of Eden. After the flood humanity would have to suffer the results of direct sunlight, and thus the beginning of the rainbow phenomenon of light being separated into colors through falling water droplets. The age of men thus decreased in this new environment where the direct sunlight of the sun brought its damaging ultra violet rays into direct contact with the flesh of men. The standards of measurement of modern-day methods of dating fossils would certainly be out of alignment in comparing the age of fossilized plants and animals that lived after the flood with the fossils of plants and animals that lived before the flood or died during the flood. This is especially critical in reference to the Carbon 14 method of dating. Carbon 14 (C-14) is produced in the atmosphere by the bombardment of the atmosphere by sunlight. This C-14 is then ingested into living plant and animal life. When the animal or plant dies, no more C-14 is ingested. Scientists thus measure the amount of C-14 in the fossils of plants and animals, comparing their results with the known degeneration of C-14 over a period of time in the present. The problem in measuring all fossils, however, is in the fact that before the flood of Noah's day there would be less C-14 in the atmosphere because the atmosphere was shielded from direct sunlight by the watery canopy. This means that less C-14 would be ingested into all plant and animal life. Therefore, according to the present known degeneration of C-14, any plant or animal that died before the flood would be measured much older than any plant or animal that lived after the flood because the plant and animal that died before the flood would have ingested less C-14. These and many other things must be considered when comparing our present world with the world that existed before the flood. We live in a different world than that which existed before the days of the flood. Peter said that that world was overthrown by the water of a great flood.

Chapter 8
NOAH'S DELIVERANCE FROM THE FLOOD

In 6:13,14 & 7:6 God gave the command to build the ark. Noah was 600 years old. In 7:7-10 Noah was given seven days to gather the animals into the ark. After the seven days, and in the 17th day, 2nd month of Noah's year (600), the rains began (7:10,11). After 40 days, the rain stopped (7:12,17). The flood was upon the earth for 150 days (7:24; 8:3). After 150 days from the beginning of the rainfall, the ark rested on Ararat in the 17th day, 7th month of Noah (8:4). In 73 days the water receded, and in the 1st day, of the 10th month of Noah's 101st year, the tops of the mountains appeared. After 40 more days, a raven was released that flew back and forth great distances from the ark (8:7). Noah then sent out a dove (8:8,9). After seven days a second dove was released and returned with a leaf (8:10,11). After another seven days a dove was released and did not return (8:12). Noah waited for 36 more days. In the 1st day, 1st month, of Noah's 601st year, the waters receded from the face of the earth to form the present oceans. After another 57 days the earth was settled into its present form and Noah left the ark on the 27th day, 2nd month, and 601st year of Noah (8:14). From the beginning of the flood to its end was one year and 10 days. Throughout this

time, the waters went to and fro on the surface of the earth.

8:1-5 Everyone in the ark was remembered with a heart of compassion by the One who cleansed the earth of human corruption. It seems that the "wind" now becomes a part of the physical environment in which humanity would live. Oceans are now formed as the waters receded from the face of the earth. In the process, great canyons and valleys were formed by water moving the unsettled and muddy soil of the earth. This process took place over a period of about 183 days from the time the rain stopped and the tops of the mountains appeared. During this time the hydrodynamic force of the water molded a new surface on the earth as enormous pressures moved great segments of the yet unsettled soil when the waters moved into forming oceans. One can only imagine the enormous forces that produced continual tsunamic movement of the waters that reshaped the face of the earth. The hydrodynamic resurfacing of the earth is now observed in the present geological formations of our world.

8:6-19 Noah sent out a raven and two doves in order to determine if land had yet appeared. ***Raven:*** The raven went to and from the ark until the day that the waters had dried. It was not until the third mission of a dove that did not return, however, that he knew the waters were gathering into their present locations. After the last dove did not return, he waited another 57 days. The change in the Hebrew word *harevu* (dry) in verse 13 to another word, *yavesah* (dry) in verse 14 emphasizes a more complete drying of the face of the earth.

NOAH COMING OUT OF THE ARK

8:20-22 Some of the clean animals that were taken into the ark were sacrificed (See 7:2-9). God "smelled a sweet aroma" in that He received the contrite act of a righteous soul. ***The imagination of man's heart is evil:*** It was not that God had made man evil, or cursed him with a sinful nature, or any original sin had come from the sin of Adam. From youth, the time when one can make a free-moral decision to obey God, one is inclined by his sinful environment to choose rebellion. The emphasis is on what one chooses to do, not on the nature of the one who makes the choices. It is in this context, however, that God will never again destroy the world by water, though an impending destruction by fire is yet in the future (2 Pt 3:10-13).

Chapter 9
GOD'S COVENANT WITH HUMANITY

9:1-5 Noah and his sons were to replenish the earth with humankind. In reference to food, mankind was now given permission to eat meat as he ate of the plants of the earth. The limitation is not to eat meat in which blood remained, for blood was the substance of life. Man was now made dominant over every animal. For this reason, God instilled the fear of man in the animals for their self-preservation.

9:6,7 Man was given the right of capital punishment in order to protect society from those who give up their right to cohabit in society, as well as to instill fear in the hearts of those who would take the life of others. This right is given in the midst of the command to produce life in order to populate the world.

9:8-12 God made a covenant, not only with Noah, but with his descendants, which would include all mankind, and also all the animal life of the world. The covenant (promise) was that He would never again destroy the earth with flood waters.

9:13-17 The rainbow appeared to all men since environmental conditions were made for weather development to exist throughout the world. The falling rain that produces a rainbow was a sign that never again would rain remain in the atmosphere to the extent that forty days of rain could occur. The rainbow, therefore, signaled the fact that God would not allow a flood to happen as it did in the days of Noah. The rainbow was a reminder to God not to cause another flood.

THE SIN & CURSE OF HAM & CANAAN

9:18-23 Noah was a farmer as Adam's son Cain. This is the first time wine is mentioned in the Bible, and in the context it is referred to in a negative sense in that Noah became drunk. Since this new fruit of the vine was probably unknown to Noah and his family, in his innocence his consumption of too much led to some unfortunate consequences. In his senseless condition he remained naked and exposed for the opportunity of Canaan to be cursed (See Lv 18:5-19; 20:17-21; 1 Sm 20:30). Both Shem and Japheth were discrete enough to guard themselves from the opportunity to look on their father's nakedness. But Ham, whether by accident or intention, discovered the nakedness of Noah, and thus Canaan bore the burden of his curse.

9:24-29 Noah was not so drunk that he did not realize that his nakedness had been witnessed by Ham. As a result of seeing his father's nakedness, Ham, the father of Canaan, was left without a blessing, but Canaan was specifically cursed to be the servant of his brethren. The character of Canaan is revealed in the nature of his descendants. They became an immoral and base people who eventually became a curse to the Israelites. The Canaanites and their gods became the symbol of moral degradation and rebellion against God. God blessed Shem and his descendants who established a moral lineage throughout history. The blessing of Japheth resulted in their becoming a superior people in the political world that was expressed by their descendants in the Persians, Greeks, Romans and other dominant civilizations of the ancient world.

Generations Of The Sons Of Noah
(10:1 - 11:9)

Outline: (1) The sons of Japheth (10:1-5), (2) The sons of Ham (10:6-20), (3) The sons of Shem (10:21-32), (4) The tower of Babel (11:1-9)

Chapter 10
THE SONS OF JAPHETH

10:1-5 From the names that are given in this chapter, some of the places of the settlement of the fathers is known, though many places are unknown. The sons of Japheth were determined by nationalistic and linguistic boundaries. These descendants occupied the regions that stretched from modern-day Turkey, the islands of the Mediterranean, and into southern Europe. The descendants of Gomer have been identified

in the records of Assyria as the Cimmerians. Magog is a term that probably referred to all northerners, particularly those of eastern Turkey (See Ez 38:2; 39:1,6). Madai would be the Median nation. Javan would be the Ionian Greeks. Tubal would be the Aegean Island inhabitants or the Etruscans. Ashkenaz would be the residents of the Caucasian mountains near the Black and Caspian Sea (See Jr 51:27). Riphath possibly lived in Anatolia or Turkey. Togarmah possibly lived near Carchemish. Elishah lived in Cyprus, Tarshish in the southern coast of Spain, Kittim in Cyprus, and Dodanim possibly resided on Rhodes of the Aegean Sea. For the Israelites, the listing of all these peoples made the written word of God a textbook on the origin of people throughout the world.

THE SONS OF HAM

10:6-12 The Cushites established Kish in the Mesopotamian valley. They later became the Kassites, some of whom possibly migrated to southern Arabia. They then moved into Abyssinia of east Africa (Ethiopia). Nimrod became the honored leader of the Cushites. He built a great city and kingdom that was composed of the city states of Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh. In contrast to a shepherd who has the people at heart, Nimrod was a "hunter." Reference is probably here to the meaning that he subdued people, rather than being a hunter of animals.

10:13,14 Mizraim is the Hebrew name for Egypt. West of Egypt is Ludim, or Libyia. Pathrusim were the people of Pathros in upper Egypt and Casluhim is the Philistines, and Caphtorim the people of Crete.

10:15-20 The Canaanites were known as Phoenicians by the Greeks. Their principal cities were the coastal cities of Sidon and Tyre that still exist in Lebanon. They were the dominant group of Palestine from as far north as Sidon to as far south as Gaza and into parts of Egypt. From Heth came the Hittites who became established in Palestine and who built the city of Hebron (23). From Heth came the Jebusites who dwelt in the area of Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:6-10). The Amorites dwelt in the highlands of Palestine and the territory east of the Jordan River.

THE SONS OF SHEM

10:21-32 The children of Eber came to be referred to as the Hebrew people. They were a Semitic-speaking nomadic people who settled around the Arabian Desert. The Elamites dwelt east of the Mesopotamian valley, whereas Asshur became the people of Assyria. The descendants of Arphaxad possibly settled northeast of the Assyrians. The descendants of Aram became the Syrian people. Their language, Aramaic, became the international language of communication during the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian empires. The sons of Uz established a city state east of the Jordan in the Arabian Desert where Job lived (Jb 1:1). The descendants of Sheba established the area south of Egypt from which the queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon (1 Kg 10:1-13). The area is still known today as Ethiopia. It is the nation in which the gospel was first preached by an Ethiopian eunuch who returned after obeying the gospel.

Chapter 11

THE TOWER OF BABEL

11:1,2 Immediately after the flood, the descendants of Noah were bound together by a common language. The building of the tower of Babel took place before the migration of the people who are described in chapter 10. With their common language, they migrated to Shinar, which is the Mesopotamian valley, through which runs the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

11:3,4 Their decision was against the will of God to multiply and repopulate the entire world. Lest they be dispersed throughout the world, they sought to make a common name for themselves with the building of a tower to reach as far as possible into the sky. This tower could possibly have been as the Babylonian ziggurats that were built similar to the pyramids of Egypt. They were made of burned brick, some structures reaching as high as 300 feet (about 90 meters). These were often constructed in the middle of cities with a pagan god honored on the top.

11:5,6 God was evidently left out of the plan to build the tower and city. What is revealed in verse 6 is the ability that was instilled within man upon his creation. If men have a common language and goal, they have the ability to work together in order to accomplish that which they imagine. This is the nature of man that God created after His image (1:26). The problem was that men here use the gift of God in rebellion against His will.

11:7-9 The best way to stop misguided men was to confuse their speech. Being unable to communicate instructions and dreams to one another, the inhabitants immediately gave up their common goal and set out across the world in obedience to the original plan of God to populate the world. From that time the city was called "Babel," a word that means "confusion." The reason God wanted man to scatter throughout the world was to prevent another total degradation of the human race. If pockets of humanity lived separate from one another, their separation would spiritually insulate their evils from one another.

Generations Of Shem (11:10-25)

Outline: (1) The genealogy of Shem (11:10-25)

THE GENEALOGY OF SHEM

This section of Genesis is Moses' account of the origin of the Semitic nations that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would eventually encounter in their wanderings through Canaan.

11:10-25 This genealogy seems to begin where the genealogy of chapter 5 concluded. As Noah was the tenth listed person from Adam, Terah is here listed as the tenth descendant from Shem, though we understand that the genealogy is not here listed in order to give every descendant in the chronology of each generation. Unlike the lineage of Shem that is given in 10:21-32, this lineage is traced through Arphaxad. The other sons of Shem are ignored in order to bring the genealogy to Abram. The purpose for this genealogy, therefore, is to bring the seedline directly from Noah to the father of our faith,

Abram (Abraham). We are thus reminded that all genealogies before the birth of the Seed (Gl 3:16) were meant to bring our attention to the fulfillment of God's promise that from the seed of woman (3:15), Satan's head would be crushed by the Seed. Chapter 12 introduces us to God's effort to preserve the seedline promise to bring the Christ into the world. Satan almost had his victory in the destruction of all humanity. However, God preserved a posterity of man through Noah. In the building of Babel, humanity was once again turning from God, and thus God turned to building a posterity of faith through Abraham, and eventually through a nation that would come from his descendants. The seedline promise would continue from Abraham.

Generations Of Terah
(11:26 - 25:11)

Outline: (1) Generations of Terah (11:26-32), (2) Wanderings of Abraham (12:1 – 25:11)

GENERATIONS OF TERAH

11:26-32 Ur of the Chaldees was a wealthy city state of the ancient world. The city was destroyed around 2100 B.C. After its destruction, those people in the area who migrated to the west were known as the Amorites. The migration of Terah's family was initially to go to Canaan, but the family came to Haran and settled there where Terah eventually died.

Chapter 12
WANDERINGS OF ABRAHAM

12:1-3 Abraham was first called by God while he lived in Ur of the Chaldees (At 7:3; Hb 11:8). His call was to leave his home and extended family in order to go to a country that God would show him. This he did only after the entire clan migrated to Haran. From Abraham God promised that He would (1) make of him a great nation, (2) give him a great name, (3) give him a land, and (4) from his seed, bless all the earth.

12:4-7 Abraham did not argue with God when the commission was given, and thus he set out to an unknown land. Since he was called in Ur, it could be assumed that his call was what prompted Terah to set out with the entire extended family to move to Canaan. In their journey they first came to Sichem, or Shechem (Gn 33:18,19; Js 24:1) or Sychar (Jn 4:5). Because the Canaanites were already in the land, it seems that God needed to reaffirm to Abraham that this was the actual land that He would give to his descendants.

12:8,9 Abraham came to Hai, or "the ruins." Archaeological discoveries have indicated that this city was actually in ruins about 500 years before Abraham's arrival. It was a fortress city that had originally been built by the Egyptians around 2900 B.C. but was destroyed around 2500 B.C. It was here that Abraham built another altar and worshiped God.

12:10-20 Because of the severity of the drought in Canaan, Abraham took his extended family into the delta regions of Egypt in order to find pasture land for his herds and food for his family. Because of the beauty of Sarah, Abraham conceived a plan to spare his own life in view of the lust of the Egyptians for beautiful women. He thus instructed Sarah to lie about her being his wife. Actually, Sarah was his half sister. She was the daughter of one of the wives of Terah, but not of Abraham's mother (20:12). It was a half truth, but a deceptive statement. As a result of this lie, the house of Pharaoh was plagued. So instead of Abraham being a blessing to the house of Pharaoh, he was a curse on this occasion. Pharaoh subsequently reprimanded Abraham and expelled him from Egypt for his deception.

Chapter 13

13:1-4 The Negev is the south, which is the country of the Edomites south of Palestine (12:9). ***Very rich:*** Abraham was very rich with livestock, gold and silver (17:12,13,23). He returned to his camping area between Bethel and Hai. We assume that the famine of the land had now come to an end, and thus he and all who were with him, and their livestock, could again reside in the land of Canaan.

13:5-9 The land was still recovering from the drought, and thus unable to support the tremendous herds of both Abraham and Lot. ***Strife between the herdsmen:*** Because they were brethren, Abraham desired that there be no strife between the two families. He thus gave his nephew, Lot, the choice as to which area he would take his herds.

13:10-13 Though the plain of Jordan was adequate for the herds of Lot, the cities of the plain were corrupt with sin. He made a good decision for the herds, but a bad one for his family. The inhabitants of Sodom were even at this time exceedingly wicked. Since his family would initially dwell among the herds in the plain, it seems that Lot felt that he would be untouched by the wickedness of the cities. Lot was a country herdsman. Unfortunately, the unrighteousness of the cities eventually reached the country. When we meet Lot again, he is living in the city of Sodom in a culture of wickedness.

13:14-18 After the departure of Lot, the Lord again renewed His promise to Abraham to give him the land of the Canaanites. He also renewed His promise that his descendants would be as the dust of the earth. It was at this time that Abraham moved to the area of Hebron that was at the time known as Mamre.

Chapter 14

14:1-7 The alliance of the four kings from the Mesopotamian area and the Hittites to the north was too strong for the defenses of the five kings of the south. The kings of the south surrendered, and for twelve years served the foreigners. ***Horites:*** The word "Horites" was probably a term that referred to the Edomites (36:20; Dt 2:12,22) in whose land there were rich deposits of copper ore in the southern part of the Arabah. It was undoubtedly this treasure for which the northern kings were looking.

14:8-12 The battle in the valley of Siddim went bad for the defending kings. They were routed in complete chaos, many of the people were taken as slaves, among whom was Lot.

14:13-16 ***When Abraham heard:*** In hearing of the capture of Lot and his family, the peaceful patriarch Abraham became the leader of an army of 318 soldiers to fight against an alliance of kings. After a journey of about 125 kilometers north

to the area of Dan, through the cover of night, Abraham was strategically able to defeat the northern invaders and save Lot, his people, and the remainder of his goods.

14:17-20 Upon his return from the slaughter of the kings, Abraham was met by the king of Sodom at the valley of Shaveh, which could possibly have been the Kidron valley near Jerusalem. ***Melchizedek:*** Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem), also met Abraham and his men. This Gentile priest and king of Salem blessed Abraham, to whom Abraham also gave a tithe of the goods that he had taken from the kings (See comments Hb 7).

14:21-24 Though the king of Sodom was being generous in not requesting the return of the goods that he had lost to the invading kings, Abraham reminded him that he had made an oath to God that he would not keep anything that belonged to the king of Sodom. Abraham knew that if he did not do this, this wicked king would later assert that it was he who made Abraham rich.

Chapter 15

15:1-6 ***Shield ... reward:*** God was aware of Abraham's anxiety concerning his lack of children to carry out the fulfillment of the promises of Genesis 12:1-3 (13:14-17). God thus promised Abraham protection. It is a reward for one to have the God of heaven as his God, which God is always gracious to aid in times of trial (1 Co 10:13). ***No offspring:*** Under the Hurrian law of the time, if a man and wife had no children to carry on their heritage or inherit their possessions, they could adopt a servant to be the heir of all that they had. It is possible that Abraham had adopted Eliezer for this purpose. ***Stars:*** God reassured Abraham that Eliezer was not the man or plan, but that there would be an heir from the fruit of his loins. His descendants would be as the stars of the heaven in number. Because of his faith, therefore, Abraham believed in the promise. His faith in the promise cancelled his previous doubt, and thus, his faith brought him righteousness before God (See comments Rm 4 & Gl 3).

15:7-11 Covenants were common between individuals and nations at the time of Abraham. In this context, God prepared Abraham for the establishment of a covenant with Him. In the making of a covenant, the promises of the covenant are first declared, and then sacrifices are made to seal the agreement. The Lord here directs Abraham to prepare for the sealing of the covenant that He is making with him.

15:12-16 God informed Abraham that the fulfillment of the land promise would not happen immediately. His descendants would first go into Egypt, and there become servants to the Egyptians. They would be residents in Egypt for 400 years as they grew into a great nation. ***Iniquity of the Amorites:*** Herein is revealed God's foreknowledge of the disintegration of a society into one that was similar to the degraded societies of Sodom and Gomorrah. Societies morally digress to the point of no return, to the point that every imagination is only evil continually (6:5). It is at this point of no moral return that God brings the judgment of destruction. This text thus reveals why God gave the command that when Israel would enter the promised land many years later that they were to destroy all the inhabitants of the land, lest the sin of the culture infect the children of Israel.

15:17-21 The covenant included the promise of the land wherein those listed in verses 19-21 would dwell at the time this covenant was to be fulfilled. It is significant to understand that the reason for a possession of land to be included in the promises of the covenant was that God's chosen culture of humanity (the nation of Israel) was to be separated from the corrupting cultures of the world that were bent on rebellion against God. In order to preserve Israel until the fulfillment of the promises, specifically the promise of the blessing (Christ) who would bless all nations, Israel was to dwell in the land. Once the Christ came, the promises were fulfilled, and thus Israel had no right to claim the land, for there was no more need for them to dwell in the land to keep themselves separated from the nations of the world. The nature of the new covenant about which Jeremiah wrote (Jr 31:31-34) was that all nations would be included in a covenant with God through obedience to the gospel. The world is now the "land" for those who are in a covenant relationship with God. But there is now no special section of land for Christians to dwell, as Palestine was given to Israel only until the coming of the Messiah.

Chapter 16

16:1-6 Since she was an old woman at this time, Sarah had given up hope that the promise of an heir would come through her childbearing. She thus proposed to Abraham a custom of their time. The custom was that if a wife could not bear children, then she could select and present to her husband a servant girl who would be a surrogate mother for an heir to the husband. Thus Sarah, with Abraham's consent, sought to work out the fulfillment of the promise through their own ingenuity (See comments Rm 9:6-13; compare Gl 4:21-31). ***Despise her mistress:*** When one seeks to legally fulfill the promises of God, only social chaos results. Hagar became arrogant toward Sarah and Sarah became bitter and abusive toward Hagar. ***Dealt harshly:*** The same law that said a wife could give her servant to her husband, also said that the wife could not send the pregnant servant away. Sarah's plan, therefore, was to deal harshly with Hagar in order to encourage Hagar under her own volition to flee from her presence.

16:7-14 ***Submit:*** Hagar's problem was her arrogance, and thus her lack of submission to Sarah. There probably would have been no problem in the relationship between Sarah and Hagar if Hagar had not become arrogant when she found herself with a child from Abraham. If she had maintain a submissive attitude, then there would have been no sending out from Abraham's clan of her and her son. ***Return to your mistress:*** If she followed the command of the Lord to return, then from her son to be, Ishmael, there would come forth a great nation. ***Wild man:*** Ishmael would not fit into the peaceful social structure of Abraham's family. In fact, he would not socially adapt to the social structures of "every man." It is not said that he would be a social outcast, but because of his nature, he would produce a nomadic culture of people who would be indigenous to themselves in the deserts of the south.

16:15,17 To Hagar's credit, she was brave enough to return

to the house of Abraham and submit to her mistress, Sarah. Abraham was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born, but he had no children when he was ninety-nine (17:1). Thus Ishmael was thirteen years old when the events of chapter 17 begin.

Chapter 17

17:1-8 ***Walk before Me:*** As examples for walking with God, Abraham could refer to the lives of Enoch (5:24) and Noah (6:9). ***Blameless:*** As in the past, Abraham was exhorted to be totally dedicated to El Shaddai, the Almighty God of heaven. ***Fell on his face:*** This would be the natural reaction from one who realized that God was directly addressing him. Worship is something that is not commanded, but the natural response of one who feels the strong presence of God. ***Abraham:*** In this renewal of the covenant, there would be a name change, for Abraham would be the father of not only many people, but many nations and kings. As the father of many nations, therefore, he would no longer be called Abram, but Abraham. ***Throughout their generations:*** The time limitation for the covenant was until the generations of Israel ended, which they did in Christ (Gl 3:26-29). We thus have a definition of the "everlasting covenant." It was "everlasting" only until its fulfillment. Once it was fulfilled, then the covenant was terminated. In this case, the word "everlasting" does not mean "without end." It refers to the time of existence until the intended point of completion. ***Everlasting possession:*** Israel's possession of the land would exist only until it had fulfilled its purpose for preserving a segment of society (Israel) for the coming of the Messiah. As with the completion of the covenant, so is the completion of Israel's right to the land. Since the old covenant has now given way to the new (Hb 8), then the promises connected with the old covenant have also given way to the promises of the new covenant.

17:9-14 The rite of circumcision was to be the token (sign) of the covenant. Those who were circumcised shared in this covenant. Even the servants of Abraham's house were to partake of the promises of the covenant, and thus they had to be circumcised. If one refused circumcision, then he was cut off from the promises of the covenant.

17:15-22 Sarah's earthly father had given her the name "Sarai," meaning, "princess." Now that she was soon to bring forth a son of the covenanted people, and thus be the mother of nations and kings, her heavenly Father changed the spelling of her name to Sarah. ***Abraham ... laughed:*** He questioned the possibility of childbirth simply because in human ability, such would be impossible for both he and Sarah since they were old. But this was the point. The promise was to be the work of God, not man (See comments Rm 9:6-13). It would have been impossible with man, but not with God. In this event, therefore, both Abraham and Sarah would understand the grace of God as God worked directly in order to make it possible for Sarah to have a child. The child would be given through grace, not through the works of man. ***Ishmael:*** Because Abraham was thinking in human terms, he suggested that Ishmael would be the heir of the promise. ***Isaac:*** The name Isaac means "laughter," and thus Abraham would have a perpetual reminder of his doubt concerning the work of God to fulfill His promises. ***Ishmael ... a great nation:*** Though Abraham at first suggested that Ishmael be the heir of the promises, God reassured him that the promises would be fulfilled through his own son. Though Ishmael would not have a part in the covenant promises, he would be the father of twelve princes and a great nation.

17:23-27 ***Circumcised ... the very same day:*** When one realizes the command of God, there is no time for delay. It is a time to act, which Abraham did in circumcising every one of his household. Every servant and those who had been bought with money were also circumcised. They were all circumcised, and thus brought into the covenant relationship that God established with Abraham.

Chapter 18

18:1-8 ***Bowed himself:*** Abraham immediately recognized that these were divine messengers. It is the Lord who appears to him. So in true middle eastern hospitality, Abraham washed their feet and prepared a feast.

18:9-15 There was something unique about one of the messengers, for in verse 13 he was designated as Lord (*Yahweh*). Both Abraham and Sarah sensed that they were in the presence of the Lord. ***Where is Sarah:*** It was the custom of the day, and for security reasons, that the women did not show themselves to the visitors. Since it was the work of the host to provide the food, it was not the man's custom to eat with the visitors. ***Sarah laughed:*** As her husband in the previous encounter with the Lord in chapter 17, Sarah laughed on the basis that she was thinking in human terms of the impossibility of old women bearing children. But with God, nothing is impossible. When men come to the point of human impossibility, God's grace is manifested (Rm 9:6-13).

18:16-19 Now that the Lord had fulfilled the first reason for His appearance to Abraham—to reaffirm that he would have a son—it was now time to accomplish the second reason for coming, to deliver Lot from the cities that He was about to destroy. Because He had chosen Abraham and his descendants from the people of the world in order to bring the Messiah into the world, the Lord revealed the destruction of the cities to Abraham. Abraham's posterity would be righteous because he and his family conformed to the standards of God's will. Because Abraham was the father of this faith, he earned the right to the knowledge of what the Lord was about to do. The destruction of the cities of the plain also became an illustration of what God would do in the end to all those who would rebel against His will (See 2 Pt 2:6; Jd 7). The "in time" judgment of God on the cities of the plain illustrates what God will do at the end of time. When the world becomes unbearable for the dwelling of the righteous, as Sodom had become for Lot, then we assume that the world has fulfilled the purpose for its existence to produce candidates for eternal dwelling.

18:20,21 It was not that the Lord through His omniscience did not know of the moral condition of the city. The very fact that He showed up for its destruction manifested that He already knew of the wickedness of the people. It was that the "in time" gravity of their judgment was to be immediate

destruction that He came with a personal visit. Both Abraham and Lot recognized the presence of the Lord in the three visitors. But because of their total degradation into sin, the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah were blinded by their own sin to perceive the presence of the Lord.

18:22-33 Abraham reasoned from his lack of knowledge of the true moral condition of Sodom and Gomorrah. He assumed that there were at least ten righteous souls in the cities. And he assumed that the Lord would not destroy the innocent ten for the sake of punishing the ungodly. Since He would have spared the cities for the sake of ten, then we must assume that Lot's family was fewer than ten, for Abraham gave up pleading after the Lord agreed that He would not destroy the cities for the sake of ten. Thus the power of ten righteous people can stay the destructive hand of God. God will spare the unrighteous for the sake of the righteous. But when the unrighteous no longer provide a safe dwelling for the righteous, then God brings judgment.

Chapter 19

19:1-3 ***Angels:*** Two of the visitors are now referred to as angels. As was the custom, Lot was in the evening at the gate of the city. Through Lot's persistence, the men were taken into his house, though the men originally intended to stay in the streets to "see" the wickedness of the city. It was only after Lot strongly urged them that they finally came into his house for protection. Lot assumed that they did not know the evil of the city, and thus he knew that they would be abused in the streets since they were strangers. Sodom and Gomorrah were not only immoral, but they were cities of crime and violence.

19:4-11 This was truly a morally anarchistic society. Both young and old surrounded the house of Lot. The young had been taught the moral degradation of the fathers, and thus there was no hope for moral regeneration. ***Relations with them:*** The plea of the bestial residents was to engage in homosexual relations with the strangers. And thus for human posterity, Sodomy is defined as those who would engage themselves in all sorts of illicit sexual promiscuity. ***I have two daughters:*** We would assume by now that Lot realized that his visitors were from God, and thus the offer of his daughters was the least evil since having the messengers of God violated in his company would reap eternal consequences. Though Lot resided in the city, he was still considered an immigrant by the residents. Their scorn of his suggestion is based on their low regard for immigrants who would make themselves a judge of their behavior. ***Break the door:*** Things were at this time out of Lot's control, and thus, it was time for Deity to intervene. Blindness of the wicked caused confusion, and so the pronouncement of judgment was confirmed upon the city.

19:12-22 This was no time for argument, and thus, Lot obeyed the voice of the angels. ***Sons-in-law:*** Lot's pleas were rejected by those who had been caught up in the wickedness of the city. So after pleading with his relatives throughout the night, the angels commanded Lot to take only his wife and two daughters and flee as fast as possible from Sodom. But Lot still did not realize the urgency of the matter, for the angels had to drag him forcefully from the city. ***Escape to the mountain:*** A tremendous destructive force was about to be unleashed on the cities of the plain. The force was going to be so violent that Lot and his family were told to flee even to the mountains. When a society digresses to the moral lows that are characteristic with Sodom and Gomorrah, it is time to take one's family and flee. If one does not, then even his own family will fall victim to the culture of wickedness that has engulfed the society. It is better to live in the mountains than in the wickedness of Sodom. ***This city:*** Zoar was a small village. Fearing that some evil might befall him in the mountains, Lot requested that he take his family to this insignificant place of refuge. And for this reason, the residents of Zoar should be grateful that they were spared the impending destruction because of the presence of a man on whom God had mercy. In this destruction, not only were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed, but also other cities of the valley of Siddim including Zeboim and Admah (10:19; 14:2,8; Dt 29:23; Hs 11:8).

19:23-26 ***Fire from the Lord:*** We do not question the fact that God can do this same thing in the future (See comments 2 Pt 3:10-13). This judgment of fire is certainly a small illustration of the power of God to destroy those who persist in their wickedness (See 2 Th 1:6-9). ***His wife looked back:*** There may be more to this than his wife taking a last look over her shoulder to home, friends and sons-in-law. It may be that she contemplated returning to Sodom, and subsequently, did turn to go back. Whatever the case, it was enough to reap the judgment of God that was poured out on the wicked cities. God placed a memorial before all who would afterward venture to the area and wonder at the pillar of salt that stood as a reminder to all concerning the fierce destruction of the Lord upon those who would live rebellious lives. We assume that the pillar was of salt in order to be weathered away in time as the memory of the cities of the plain would if it were not for these inspired words of Moses.

19:27-29 From Mamre where Abraham resided, to Sodom and Gomorrah, was a great distance. Abraham witnessed the smoke rise from the cities, not knowing if Lot had been delivered from the destruction. ***Sent Lot out:*** It was for the sake of Abraham that Lot was delivered from the destruction.

19:30-35 It seems that Lot may have passed up Zoar, deciding that it was better to dwell in the mountains with his two daughters than in the wickedness of the village. He came to his senses that even Zoar was plagued with wickedness, and thus with the remainder of his family, he went to the mountains for the sake of his daughters. ***We will lie with him:*** The daughters were not unaffected by the wickedness of Sodom. Here they commit incest with their father for the sake of preserving their father's posterity. We must not assume that their sin was right for the sake of the good they wanted to accomplish. It could be that the daughters believed that they alone escaped, and thus there would be no male to carry on the lineage of their father. Lot was a victim of their scheme in that he was drunk when the incest took place. The two daughters had devised the scheme without discussion with their father, for surely he would have objected. So in his senseless state of mind, both

daughters went in to their father, and both conceived from the seed of Lot.

19:36-38 The narrative of the actions of the daughters of Lot is recorded for the historical posterity of Israel. From the birth of Moab came the Moabites, and from the birth of Benammi came the Ammonites. Both nations were thus considered close relatives to the Israelites since Lot was the nephew of Abraham. Many years later when Naomi took men from the Moabites as husbands for Orpah and Ruth, Orpah and Ruth did not marry men outside the lineage of the Terah family (See Rt 1:1-5).

Chapter 20

20:1-7 ***She is my sister:*** It seems that Abraham was always apprehensive when journeying into the land of pagan powers. Since such environments were filled with immorality of every sort, we would not question his fears. As with the Pharaoh of Egypt in 12:14-20, so again here he asks Sarah, his half sister, to state that she is only his sister. It was a half truth, but still a deception. ***God came to Abimelech:*** God came to Abimelech in this case, not to Abraham. Abimelech had done the deed in ignorance, saying that he and his nation were righteous. Through some providential manner God kept Abimelech from touching Sarah, or else he would have reaped the judgment of God. ***Prophet:*** Abraham was a prophet in that God in these times spoke through the fathers of extended families in order to reveal His will (Hb 1:1).

20:8-13 Abraham was a migrant in the land of strangers, both in Canaan and in the land of Abimelech. The customs of his homeland were different in marriage, for he had married one of his father's daughters through another wife other than his mother. Knowing that he was in pagan territory as a sojourner, he had agreed with Sarah that wherever they went, Sarah would resort to saying that she was his sister, when actually she was only his stepsister.

20:14-18 To Abimelech's credit, he did what a righteous man would do. He restored Sarah to Abraham, as well as gave him a thousand pieces of silver. He then offered to Abraham the hospitality of dwelling anywhere in his land. Sarah was rebuked in the sense that Abimelech said that she should never be ashamed to state that Abraham was her husband. ***God healed Abimelech:*** Abimelech's wife and female servants could not have children during the time Sarah and Abraham were living the deception in his house. Thus Sarah and Abraham dwelt for some time in Abimelech's presence before the truth was known.

Chapter 21

21:1-7 ***Sarah conceived:*** In the conception of the child in the womb of Sarah, the fulfillment of God's promise was realized (See 17:15-17; 18:9-15). What was impossible for man, in that an old woman as Sarah, who was beyond the years of conceiving a child, was possible for God. Both Abraham and Sarah had laughed at the impossible, but through the birth, no one could ever conclude that God was not at work in the conception and birth. It was truly a miracle of God that Isaac was born to continue the posterity of Abraham, and thus continue the seedline of the coming Savior of the world.

21:8-14 ***Feast:*** A Near East custom was to have a feast in celebration of a newborn child. The feast here took place when the child was weaned, which could have been up to three years after the birth. It was Ishmael, not Hagar, who was the occasion for discord in the family. The older son Ishmael was mocking the small child Isaac. ***Distressful:*** The matter was now stressful to Abraham, though originally the conflict was between Sarah and Hagar (16:4-6). In this case, God stated that Abraham should listen to his wife, Sarah. He must reassure her that God also had great plans for Ishmael, for from Ishmael would come a great nation. The custom was that the son of the servant woman was to be cared for by the father of the child. He was to do this even though the true wife eventually gave birth to a son. In this case, however, the custom was set aside. It was to be set aside in order to make it perfectly clear that the posterity of Abraham would be continued through Isaac, not Ishmael.

21:15-21 When the water was gone, Hagar expected death to occur soon. It is not known if she knew of the promise that was made to Abraham that through Ishmael a great nation would come. If she were not knowledgeable of this information, at least on this occasion she was told by God that she and the child would not die, for a great nation would come from Ishmael. ***Wilderness of Paran:*** This was the area south of Canaan. One cannot miss the placement of buffeting nations that would develop around the land of Palestine. The two sons of Lot, Abraham's nephew, grew into the two nations of Moab and Ammon on the east side of the Jordan, east of Palestine. Now Ishmael would develop a buffer nation to the south of Canaan. It seems that God was providentially setting up Canaan for the possession of Abraham's descendants that would take place about four hundred years from the time these events happened in Abraham's life. These nations would serve as buffer cultures from the truly pagan and polytheistic cultures that existed in Abraham's time and would continue to the day when Israel would enter Canaan. The buffer nations would all come from Abraham's seed, though they would not be of the seed through Isaac who would bring the Redeemer into the world. The concept of buffer nations around Israel who would settle in Palestine reveals the fact that God planned to reserve Israel as a nation as long as possible in the midst of an idolatrous world.

21:22-24 ***Swear to me:*** It seems that Abimelech still remembered how he had been previously deceived by Abraham (20:1-18). Kindness: Since he had been kind to Abraham in the past, he was asking the favor in return.

21:25-34 After Abraham swore to an agreement with Abimelech, he rebuked him for the behavior of his servants concerning a water well that had been stolen from Abraham's servants. An interesting principle of godly behavior is here illustrated. Abraham's servants had labored to dig the well. When it was finished, Abimelech's servants stole it from them. They stole the labor of others who dug the well without compensating them for it. It was thus an act of theft. ***Made a covenant:*** This is the first mention of covenants in the Old Testament that men commonly made with one another in ancient times. What transpired in the making of a covenant was

that the conditions for the covenant were first made by both parties (vs 23). Each party then swore by the covenant (vs 24). Then the sacrifice of animals was made in order to seal the covenant (vs 28). In the sacrifice of the animals, everyone involved in making the covenant ate of the sacrificed animals in a great feast. Such was the custom of Abraham's culture in making covenants. In this case, Abraham wanted to provide the animals for the sacrifice, though it was customary that both parties provide the offering. ***Beersheba:*** The place where the covenant was made was named Beersheba, which meant either "well of swearing" or "well of seven." (The Hebrew word for "swear" and "seven" are the same.) This location would eventually become the southern extremity of the promised land that would be given to Abraham's descendants four hundred years from the time of this event.

Chapter 22

22:1,2 ***Tested:*** It is not that God here proceeds to tempt Abraham to sin, as is indicated by some translations. The Hebrew word *nissah* means to either test or put on trial. The purpose of what follows is a test of Abraham's faith. God does not tempt men to sin (Js 1:13).

22:3-8 Verse 2 indicates that it was possibly in the evening hours that God issued the command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, for Abraham had to rise in the morning. ***Rose up early:*** There was no debate with God from a loving father who made the command. There seems to have been no sleepless nights, for he rose up early in order to carry out the instructions of the command. We should not assume that Sarah was informed of the matter, for Abraham told no one what was transpiring. He simply prepared for the journey and for the sacrifice, and then headed for the God-appointed location. After three days of journey, Abraham saw at a distance, Moriah, the appointed place of the sacrifice. ***We will come again:*** Though Abraham had no previous experience of a bodily resurrection, he trusted that God would resurrect the body he would put to death. "He concluded that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also figuratively received him back" (Hb 11:19). ***Where is the lamb:*** It is at this time that Isaac is wondering concerning what animal they would use for the sacrifice. Abraham's response was, "God will provide." Abraham's faith, therefore, went to the limit of trusting that God in the final minute would provide the sacrifice. And so He did for us in Jesus.

22:9-12 One wonders what was going through the mind of Abraham as he built the altar upon which he would offer his son in obedience to God. One wonders what was going through the mind of Isaac as his father bound his hands and laid him upon the altar. There seems to have been no struggle, only a faithful son who relinquished to the faith of his father. ***Took the knife:*** We would suppose that both the father and son had now tensed up as Abraham raised his hand to inflict the mortal blow. God allowed the test to go as far as an extended arm ready to thrust a knife into the heart of a firstborn son. And then the words came, "Do not lay your hand upon the lad." Your son, your only son: It is in this statement that we now understand the reason for the command to offer the son. It was truly a test of Abraham's faith. He would become the father of faith to all those who would in the future put their faith in an only begotten Son. Our Father placed His Son on a cross and did not stay the hand of the executioner. As Moses inscribes these words for the posterity of Israel, he wanted all Israel throughout history never to forget this event. There was coming a time when an only Son would be sacrificed for the sins of all humanity. And a loving Father would allow it to happen.

22:13-19 ***Because you have done this thing:*** In what he had done, Abraham was truly justified by works (Js 2:21). If he had not done the work, there would have been no evidence of his faith. He thus showed his faith by his works (Js 2:18). And because of his manifested faith he earned the right to be the father of many nations and the one through whom all nations of the world would be blessed. In the test we would suppose that Satan was rejoicing in the darkest chambers of hell because God was asking Abraham to terminate the seedline of Abraham. But such was not the case, for the promises remained. *"In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed"* (Gn 12:3).

22:20-24 ***Rebekah:*** This genealogy is given in order to bring Rebekah, the future wife of Isaac (ch 24), into the lineage of Abraham for the continuation of the seedline of Abraham.

Chapter 23

23:1-20 It was a noble gesture for the children of Heth to offer free of charge any burial place within their territory for Sarah's burial. But in his integrity, Abraham would not allow his respect for Sarah to be taken from him by the free offering of others. Abraham paid for what he needed. In his last show of respect for his wife, he purchased the burial site. He thus took possession of the only part of the promised land that he would ever possess. So when a price was agreed upon, through the mediation of the children of Heth, a cave was purchased from Ephron, the son of Zohar. Abraham did not take handouts.

Chapter 24

24:1-9 It was a Near East custom that the father had the responsibility of finding a wife for his son. Since the daughters of the Canaanites did not share either Abraham's heritage or faith, he made Eliezer swear with an oath that he would not find a woman among the Canaanites for Isaac. As was the custom, Eliezer had to place his hand under his master's thigh in making the oath. Abraham then sent his servant back to the land of his relatives.

24:10-28 Eliezer's task was guided by the hand of God. Abraham first said that he would be directed by an angel. With a great deal of Abraham's possessions, Eliezer went to the city of Nahor, a city named after Abraham's grandfather (11:22-26). He came to a well where women drew water for their livestock, and then prayed that God do the rest. It seems that the answer to the prayer was already in progress before he closed the prayer, for Rebekah, Abraham's niece, was already making her way to the well. The servant nature of Rebekah was then revealed in that she drew water for Eliezer and all his

camels. When Eliezer heard that Rebekah was of the house of Nahor, his response was worship to the Lord for bringing to pass all that had transpired. He realized that his encounter with Rebekah was the work of God and not a mere coincidence. It is significant that Eliezer carried out this mission through prayer and perception of the work of God in answer to his prayers. He asked that God lead him to the right woman. Because of his faith in God that he would be led to the right person, he remained alert to the work of God in his life, and thus perceived that when the mission was accomplished it was the work of God.

24:29-51 Rebekah's report to the house of Laban created great excitement concerning the visitor. While overwhelming Eliezer with hospitality, Eliezer had to first inform everyone why he was sent. The reason Eliezer rehearsed the events concerning his encounter with Rebekah was to explain to everyone that what had just transpired was not his own invention. He identified his master, Abraham, from whom he came. Then he identified that the encounter with Rebekah could be nothing less than the work of God. The events that happened, therefore, were given as proof that Rebekah was truly the one who would become the wife of Isaac.

24:52-60 The events that were taking place were happening too fast for the relatives. Though they knew that it was the work of God, their sending away of Rebekah was very difficult. They thus requested that she stay ten more days. But Eliezer felt that since the Lord had prospered him this far in his quest for a wife for Isaac, he must not delay in returning to Abraham. The relatives, therefore, left the decision to Rebekah. We must admire this young woman for her bravery, for she immediately agreed to leave her family in order to go with a stranger to a new country to which she had never been. It takes brave women as this to carry out the mission of God.

24:61-67 Rebekah journeyed from the far north, the land of Nahor. At the same time, Isaac came from the far south, the Negev. It was only right that the two meet somewhere in the middle of the promised land with an encounter that would perpetuate the promises of God that the land be given to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac.

Chapter 25

25:1-6 God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations was continued through Keturah (17:4). Through Keturah he had six sons, seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Since Abraham was well over one hundred years old at the time he married Keturah, it is certain that as God aided him and Sarah to give birth to Isaac, He also aided in making it possible for his physically old body to implant his seed in Keturah's womb in order for her to give birth to six sons. ***Zimran:*** Probably settled in the interior of Arabia. ***Jokshan:*** Probably settled in southern Arabia. ***Medan and Midia:*** This is east of the Elamitic gulf in Arabia. ***Ishbak:*** Possibly in the land of the Edomites. ***Shuah:*** Possibly northern Idumea (Jb 2:11). ***Sheba:*** This is probably the father of the Sabeans (Jb 1:15; 6:19). ***Deban:*** This could be those mentioned in Jeremiah 25:23. ***Asshurim:*** A warlike tribe south of Hejas. ***Letuahim:*** Those of Hejas. ***Leummim:*** Tribal groups that extended to Babylon and the Mesopotamian valley. The other sons also produced tribal groups that encircled the land of Palestine. With the other descendants of Esau and Ishmael, Palestine was buffered with those who came from the seed of Abraham. All these descendants of Abraham produced nations in preparation for the giving of the land of Canaan to the children of Israel after their deliverance from Egyptian captivity about four hundred years from the time of Abraham.

25:7-11 Both Isaac and Ishmael joined in the burial of their father with Rebekah in the cave of Machpelah. ***Gathered to his people:*** This is a common phrase that is used in reference to the death of patriarchs (25:17; 35:29; 49:29; Nm 20:24; 27:13). The phrase possibly implied that the patriarch joined those of his people who had already died (Compare 15:15; Mt 22:31-33; Hb 11:13-16).

Generations Of Ishmael (25:12-18)

Outline: (1) The sons of Ishmael (25:12-18)

THE SONS OF ISHMAEL

25:12-18 There were two reasons for recording this genealogy of Ishmael. First, God wanted the Israelites to know that He had fulfilled His promise to Hagar, that through Ishmael many nations would come (16:12; 21:18). Second, God wanted a written record available to Israel in order to remind her that the nations that came from Ishmael were the descendants of Isaac's half brother. By the time of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian captivity, Palestine was encircled with the nations that had come from the seed of Abraham. Since the Israelites received preferential treatment by God, there arose a jealousy between Israel and the surrounding seed of Abraham through Hagar and Keturah, which jealousy has caused strife even to this day.

Generations Of Isaac (25:19 - 35:29)

Outline: (1) Birth of Esau and Jacob (25:19-34), (2) Isaac's encounter with Abimelech (26:1-33), (3) The marriages of Esau (26:34,35), (4) Isaac's blessing of Jacob (27:1-40), (5) Jacob's flight from Esau (27:41 – 28:22), (6) Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel (29:1-30), (7) Birth of Jacob's sons (29:31 – 30:24), (8) Jacob's struggles with Laban (30:25-43), (9) Jacob's flight from Laban (31:1-42), (10) Jacob's covenant with Laban (31:43-55), (11) Jacob's reunion with Esau (32:1 – 33:20), (12) The rape of Dinah (34:1-31), (13) Birth of Benjamin and death of Rachel and Isaac (35:1-29)

BIRTH OF ESAU & JACOB

25:19-26 ***Padan-aram:*** This was the homeland of Rebekah north of Palestine that stretched to the upper Mesopotamian valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. ***She was barren:*** A comparison between verses 20 & 26 seem to indicate that she was barren for twenty years. ***Struggled together:*** From the womb, these two different nations that were within Rebekah would be different in character, and thus struggle with one another throughout their existence. It could be that the order

of their birth was what later produced the tension between the two sons. ***Esau:*** The name means "hairy." ***Jacob:*** This name means "heel catcher." It was the custom of the day that the firstborn inherited the legal rights of the family. In this case, Esau was the firstborn son, and thus had the legal rights to the heritage of Isaac. But such was not to be in reference to the heritage through whom God would establish the nation of Israel.

25:27-34 The gentle Isaac loved his strong son, Esau, and the strong Rebekah loved the less aggressive son, Jacob. Opposites do attract. ***Rebekah loved Jacob:*** In the development of the nations that came from these two sons, it seems that the love of the mother won out over the preference of the father in determining the chosen people of Israel (See comments Rm 9:10-13). ***Perfect man:*** This Hebrew word that is translated "perfect" (*tam*) is also translated "perfect" in reference to Noah in Genesis 6:9. He was perfect, not in the sense of being sinless, but in his perfect focus on the one true and living God. ***Birthright:*** The fact that Esau did not appreciate the significance of the birthright that was due the firstborn is manifested in the fact that he counted the birthright of less value than a dish of porridge. He traded a nation with God's blessing for a bowl of soup. The Hebrew writer said he was a "profane" person for doing such. His attitude thus disqualified him from being the father of a nation through whom God would bring the Savior into the world.

Chapter 26
ISAAC ENCOUNTERS ABIMELECH

26:1-5 It seems that history is here repeating itself. Another famine forced the Isaac clan to move to the coastal Mediterranean Sea area that was within the territory of Abimelech, the pagan king with whom Abraham had an uneasy relationship. In order to reassure Isaac, God rehearsed the promise that He had made to Abraham, saying that his seed would be a blessing to all nations. The conditions of the covenant for these promises was illustrated by the life of Abraham, who obeyed all that God had instructed him. Abraham's obedience thus became an exhortation to Isaac that the condition for receiving the promises of the covenant was that he also must be obedient to all that he was instructed by God to do.

26:6-11 ***She is my sister:*** The customs of the culture from which Rebekah came would indeed make Rebekah the "sister" of Isaac. Any one of the family lineage of those from Ur of the Chaldees, of which Nahor, Terah and Abraham originated, would be considered close relatives. In this case, and according to our terminology today, Rebekah would have been Isaac's cousin. But according to their custom, a cousin would be considered a sister, and thus the marriage would be a sister/wife relationship. Abimelech understood nothing of this, and thus the claim that Rebekah was a sister, knowing that the pronouncement would be misunderstood, was a lie. ***He was afraid:*** The reason for the deception was that Isaac, a foreigner, felt very insecure in the land of the Philistines at this time. He knew that the pagan king could claim any woman in the king's territory to be his wife. And if the woman was married, even the subjects of the pagan king could easily kill the husband in order to make the wife available for marriage.

26:12-16 ***Go from us:*** The wealth of Isaac intimidated Abimelech. God had blessed Isaac so much that he had actually become stronger in wealth and manpower than Abimelech.

26:17-25 Isaac continued to dig wells. But the Philistines filled them in order to move him out of their territory. Instead of struggling over the matter, Isaac simply moved on. However, in naming the wells, he left a reminder for all to remember his digging of the wells and the strife that was caused by those who stole them from him. ***Esek:*** "Quarrel." ***Sitnah:*** "Feud." ***Rehoboth:*** "Room." ***Do not fear:*** Isaac and his family had now been forced to move to Beersheba (21:30,31) where God encouraged him to stay and fear no more.

26:26-33 Abimelech took the initiative to establish a covenant with Isaac, knowing that Isaac was much stronger than he. In the manner of establishing covenants, promises were made and a feast was given in order to celebrate the covenant.

THE MARRIAGES OF ESAU

26:34,35: The tragedy of a polygamous marriage with pagan women is here illustrated with the marriage of Esau to Judith and Bashemath. He rejected the moral standards of his fathers and followed after the low moral standards of the pagan nations. It seems that Esau had at this time drifted away from being righteous before God, for his family now brought grief to God's chosen, Isaac and Rebekah. Marriage to an unbeliever is the signal that the believer is not taking his or her faith seriously.

Chapter 27
ISAAC'S BLESSING OF JACOB

27:1-4 In his sickness, Isaac believed that he was going to die, though he lived until he was 180 years old (35:28). His sickness here reminded him of the brevity of life, and thus he needed to take care of his inheritance matters. Since Esau was his firstborn, it was legally his right to receive a special blessing (inheritance) from the father of the family. But this blessing of Esau ignored the prophecy that the elder (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob) (25:23). It also ignored the fact that Esau had already sold his birthright to Jacob (25:29-34).

27:5-17 Rebekah remembered both the prophecy and the selling of the birthright. Because of the deceit that now took place in the family, it seems that an understanding of the plan of God through Jacob had broken down in the communication between Rebekah and Isaac, and surely between Jacob and Esau. So in the scheme of things in reference to the blessing, Rebekah took things into her own hands in order that the son she loved (Jacob) would receive the family blessing (25:28). We assume that in His foreknowledge God knew that all this would take place.

27:18-29 By the direction of his mother, the patriarch lied to his father in saying that he was the firstborn and that the Lord had helped him to quickly acquire the game. He also lied when he claimed to be Esau his brother. ***Blessed:*** Among the patriarchs, the blessing was a last will and testament. Though

the blessing was oral, it was as binding as a written contract. ***Lord over:*** Not only did Isaac give a blessing that Esau inherit his possessions, he also blessed him that he be the lord over the heritage of Esau. In the blessing, Isaac stated that if one would rise up against the heritage of Jacob, he would be cursed.

27:30-40 ***Isaac trembled exceedingly:*** Once Isaac knew that he had been tricked, he knew that the blessing could not be passed to another. The pronouncement of the blessing was final, and Esau realized the same (Hb 12:17). Esau's demise took place sometime before when he had already sold his birthright to Jacob (25:29-34; see Hb 12:15,16). ***He took away my birthright:*** This was not the case, for Esau sold the birthright for a bowl of soup. However, because he was of an unrepentant nature, he blamed his brother Jacob for his troubles. Unrepentant people never take ownership of their sin, concluding that the fault for their problems was always with someone else. ***Blessing ... for me:*** The blessing for Esau was a prophecy of the behavior of the nation that would come from him. They would live by the sword. Esau was given the role of living in a servant position in relation to the heritage of his brother, but was given the right to eventually cast off the lordship of Jacob's heritage.

JACOB'S FLIGHT FROM ESAU

27:41-46 ***Esau hated Jacob:*** Esau's bitterness turned to hatred. His hatred then turned into a scheme to murder his brother. This again was at a time when Rebekah's ingenuity came into play as she sought to save Jacob by devising a plan that he take a wife from their relatives in Haran, from the house of Laban her brother. Her strategy was to convince Isaac that Jacob should not, as Esau, take a wife from the daughters of Heth, which daughters brought grief into Isaac's family. Isaac thus agreed with the plan, and Jacob was sent away from the fury of his brother Esau. ***Few days:*** Though she believed the trip to Haran would be brief, little did Rebekah know that it would be about twenty years before Jacob would return.

Chapter 28

28:1-9 It seems that Isaac was not aware of the scheme of Rebekah to separate Jacob from Esau, since Esau planned to murder Jacob. Because of Isaac's blessing of Jacob on his departure, it was now believed by all that Jacob would be the one through whom the posterity of Abraham would be continued. ***Esau ... took Mahalath:*** Esau had a hard time pleasing his father. He did not understand that it was his behavior that was contrary to the behavior of godly men. His association with ungodly men and women made it impossible for him to live according to the faith of Isaac.

28:10-17 Jacob's trip to Haran would be almost 500 kilometers from Beersheba. The event of the night proved to be miraculous in the sense that Jacob did not expect such to happen. ***Ladder:*** The symbolism is that a connection was made between heaven and earth. ***Angels:*** These were the messengers between man and God. The purpose of the event was to reassure Jacob that through him the promises made to Abraham would be continued (12:1-3).

28:18-22 Jacob responded in three ways to the vision. ***Stone:*** He set up the stone he used for a pillow and anointed it with oil to memorialize the location. ***Bethel:*** He changed the name from Luz to Bethel. Vow: He made a commitment to return to God a tenth of those blessings that would come his way by the blessing of God.

Chapter 29

JACOB'S MARRIAGE TO LEAH & RACHEL

29:1-8 ***People of the east:*** These were probably the people of the upper Mesopotamian region that included Haran. Jacob's first encounter with the people of the region was at a common well where the flocks were watered. Rachel was the last to arrive at the well. Upon her arrival, the stone was moved away and the livestock were watered.

29:9-14 Rachel was the cousin of Jacob. It seems that what took several people to do—roll the stone from the well's mouth—Jacob was motivated to do by himself in his response at seeing Rachel. ***Kissed Rachel:*** Jacob was an emotional person, and thus out of his excitement, he kissed the one who would eventually become his wife. ***Her father's relative:*** Jacob identified himself as Rachel's cousin. Jacob was the nephew of Laban, and thus the term "brother" refers to him as a kinsman. Because Jacob was a kinsman to the family of Terah, there was a warm welcome for him in Laban's family. However, there seems to be less religious significance to this encounter than what happened when Eliezer came for Rebekah (See 24:32-49).

29:15-30 ***Wages:*** Jacob had evidently been working for Laban during the month that he was staying with him. He did not stay with Laban for free. He worked for his food and shelter (See comments At 20:34,35). ***What will your wages be:*** We could assume that Laban had noticed that Jacob was very interested in Rachel. Since she was the youngest, this placed him in an advantageous position when Jacob said he would work for seven years for her hand. ***Leah:*** It was the custom that the eldest first be married, and then the younger daughters. However, it was through the deceptive thinking of Laban that Leah would first be given to Jacob instead of Rachel. It was not until the morning after the wedding, however, that Jacob discovered the deception. ***We will give you this one also for the service that you will serve:*** Though Jacob was greatly irritated at the deception, he agreed to work another seven years for Rachel. After Leah was given her week with Jacob, Rachel was then given to him in advance of the seven years of work he was to do for her. Part of the problem in this situation was with Jacob who did not inquire concerning the legalities of marriage in the land in which he was a stranger. He was culturally far removed from the homeland culture from which his grandfather Abraham had come. He could have prevented the misunderstanding on this occasion if he had first inquired concerning marriage legalities among the people with whom he dwelt. Laban, however, was short of honesty in the matter. He did, according to the laws of the land, marry off his eldest, and possibly unattractive daughter, plus gain another seven years of work from Jacob.

BIRTH OF JACOB'S SONS

29:31-35 ***Leah was unloved:*** This would certainly be a sad situation in which Laban had placed his daughter. Jacob did not hate her, as some translations have portrayed the meaning. Since his affection was first toward Rachel, Leah would certainly have developed a very low self-esteem as a wife and person. Because of her faith, however, Leah found comfort in the fact that the Lord had opened her womb for the bearing of children, while Rachel remained barren. The meanings of the names of the sons she bore possibly signified her feelings. ***Reuben:*** "Behold, a son." She was given the honor of bearing the firstborn. ***Simeon:*** The Lord "has heard." God answered her prayers for children. ***Levi:*** "Attachment." She felt bonded to Jacob. ***Judah:*** "Praise." She was grateful to God for being the one who would bear children, since the bearing of four sons took place over a period of possibly four years. Rachel would have been barren during this time. The irony of the sons is that though Leah was unloved, from her came Reuben, the firstborn. Levi would eventually give birth to the tribe of priests within the nation of Israel. Through Judah would come the Messiah.

Chapter 30

30:1-8 ***Give me children:*** Desperation is in this statement of Rachel. Jacob certainly could not make such happen, but he felt Rachel's frustration. Both agreed, therefore, to resort to the custom to which Abraham and Sarah resorted with Hagar (16:2). A handmaid, Bilhah, was thus brought forward in order that children be produced for Rachel through the handmaid. As a result of the union between Jacob and Bilhah, Dan ("judge") was born. Through Bilhah Rachel had legal claim to the children, and thus Bilhah bore another son, Naphtali ("wrestling").

30:9-13 The competition for children continued through Leah who also gave her handmaid, Zilpah, to Jacob. From Zilpah came Gad ("good fortune") and Asher ("happy").

30:14-21 ***Mandrakes:*** According to the superstitious beliefs of the time it was believed that the berries of this plant would induce fertility. Regardless of the mandrakes, Rachel remained barren, but Leah bore a fifth son, Issachar ("hire"). She also bore a sixth son whom she named Zebulun ("dwelling"). She then bore the only daughter of Jacob, Dinah ("judgment").

30:22-24 The superstitious belief in the mandrakes proved worthless in reference to making Rachel fruitful. However, after many years as Jacob's wife, God listened to her pleas, and thus she finally bore a son, Joseph ("addition").

JACOB'S STRUGGLES WITH LABAN

30:25-36 ***The Lord has blessed me:*** Laban was certainly a selfish man. He had deceived Jacob in order to gain seven extra years of work out of him, and now he was asking Jacob to stay with him because he had been blessed by Jacob's presence. ***Name me your wages:*** It seems that Jacob is now given the opportunity to extract from Laban more than what Laban would be willing to give. So Jacob took the offer in order to gain the best animals from the flocks of Laban. ***My honesty will testify:*** Jacob wanted to cull out of Laban's flocks the speckled, spotted and brown sheep and the spotted and speckled goats, which animals were considered the inferior breed of the flocks. He would use these off-colored sheep and goats to develop his own flocks. By making this separation in the flocks it would later be easy to determine which animals belonged to Laban and which animals belonged to Jacob. However, the very day that Laban made the deal, he secretly culled out of his flocks the colored goats and sheep that Jacob had said he wanted. This was certainly a violation of the agreement, but manifested the devious nature of Laban in his business dealings.

30:37-43 What Jacob seems to have done here appears on the surface to be a superstitious practice that would encourage the fertility of those animals which he had agreed to take. However, he later told his wives that the practice of selective breeding came by the instructions of God (31:10-12). What he was doing in the breeding process was limiting the breeding with the males that had peculiar coloring. When the goats and sheep gave birth, he separated the peculiar colored ones in order that they alone be raised for breeding among themselves. He kept the spotted and speckled animals for his own and left the other animals for Laban's flock. The result of the breeding was that Jacob's livestock increased exceedingly.

Chapter 31

JACOB'S FLIGHT FROM LABAN

31:1-16 Jacob's success generated jealousy in the heart of Laban's sons, and where there is jealousy, malicious actions usually follow. Jealousy always leaves a trail of heartache. Jacob thus sensed that it was time to leave. ***Return to the land:*** In order to reassure Jacob, the Lord first instructed Jacob to return to the house of Isaac and Rebekah. God then promised Jacob that He would be with him. ***Changed my wages:*** It seems that the pagan culture of Laban and his sons justified the dishonest dealings by which he treated Jacob. In the eyes of Laban and his sons, therefore, what they did was not dishonest, but the manner by which one would deal in business with others. But according to the ethics and morals of God, his actions were sinful. So Jacob explained to Rachel and Leah that it was time to depart from the presence of such influence. ***The flock of your father:*** Jacob reassured Rachel and Leah that the work was of God, not his own invention. And thus it was God's will that Jacob prosper for a greater purpose, that purpose being that Jacob's possessions increase for his return to Palestine. Both Rachel and Leah agreed that their father had been unfair in his dealings with Jacob, so they agreed with Jacob to leave secretly. ***Foreigners ... money:*** It seems that both Rachel and Leah harbored some resentment toward their father since he had treated them as foreigners and used their inheritance for his own means. Because their own relationship with their father was now strained, they agreed with Jacob that it was now time to migrate as a family. The lesson from Laban's life is that he lost his daughters, his grandchildren, and the greater part of his possessions. He also lost his best shepherd, Jacob, because of his unrighteous dealings with Jacob. He thus suffered the curse of God because he

dealt unrighteously with the one whom God had chosen and blessed to continue the promises made to Abraham.

31:17-24 A plan was devised by which Jacob would take his wives, children and possessions and flee from the presence of Laban. ***The idols:*** These were essentially the deeds of ownership of the property of Laban. Whoever possessed them had legal rights to the inheritance of Laban. ***Dream by night:*** If Laban's intentions were to harm Jacob, surely this would have been a nightmare. In order to strike fear in the heart of Laban, God warned him not even to speak harshly with the heir of Abraham and the one through whose seedline the promises would be fulfilled.

31:25-35 In this suspense filled encounter, Laban had no sense of conscience about his own unrighteous behavior. He accused Jacob of stealing away his family, of being discourteous in fleeing, of ignoring his supposed generosity, and of being denied the right to send his daughters away with a feast. The irony of his speech is in the fact that he was guilty of all that he accused Jacob. But such is the character of ungodly behavior and ethics that are molded by ungodly values. ***Stolen my gods:*** Laban even accused Jacob of being a thief in reference to the idols that Rachel had concealed in her goods. Since Jacob was unaware of this, such an accusation was false. ***Jacob answered:*** In Jacob's answer to Laban's accusations, he did not defend himself. When slandered by those who are slanderous in their character, defense is often futile since the slander comes from an evil heart. Evil hearts usually never correctly interpret the response of those they slander simply because their thinking is twisted by jealous motives. ***Manner of women:*** Rachel had hidden the idols in the saddle of her camel. When it came time to search all that belonged to her, she excused herself from the search, saying that she was in her monthly period of womanhood, and thus should not be moved from her saddle.

31:36-42 ***Jacob was angry:*** Now the man of God was stirred with righteous indignation. The accusation that he was a thief greatly angered Jacob. As a result, he proceeded to upbraid Laban for his unrighteous behavior throughout their relationship with one another, which upbraiding Laban rightly deserved.

JACOB'S COVENANT WITH LABAN

31:43-55 ***Let us make a covenant:*** It seems that Jacob's rebuke of Laban produced some repentance in the heart of the accuser. It was true that all that Jacob had was the result of his stay with Laban. But Jacob was not Laban's slave, and thus he had justly worked according to Laban's conditions to produce all that he had. Everything that Jacob possessed was legally his. Now Laban initiated the making of a covenant. The normal procedure for establishing covenants between men was carried out in that a memorial was erected out of stone, oaths were made, and a feast was conducted by eating the meat of a sacrificed animal. Laban named the heap of stones Jegar-sahadutha, after the Aramaic language, but Jacob named it Galeed ("the heap of witness") after the Hebrew language. It was also called Mizpah which means "watchtower." The monument was an agreement that Laban would not increase his territory south of the monument and Jacob would not increase his north of the monument in order that they not infringe on one another's pasture lands. ***Mistreat my daughters:*** Laban's final request was that Jacob treat his daughters well and that he take no more wives. It seems that Laban realized the unfortunate consequences that came with polygamous marriages, and thus, he exhorted Jacob not to increase his problems by taking other wives, especially wives from the Canaanites in whose land he would dwell.

Chapter 32

JACOB'S REUNION WITH ESAU

32:1-8 After the encounter with Laban, Jacob turned his face toward another great struggle with a relative, the struggle to deal with his brother Esau who many years before had sought to murder him. The anxiety that Jacob felt concerning his brother's attempt to murder him helps us understand why it was easy for Jacob to stay so long with the house of Laban. He was in no hurry, therefore, to return to his father and mother simply because he believed throughout the years that Esau was going to do him harm. ***Mahanaim:*** The name means "two camps." There was the camp of his family, and there was the invisible camp of the angels who surrounded him for his protection. He was thus to have no fear because God was near with His protecting angels. ***Find favor:*** Jacob knew that he must now give account to his brother for the sins of the past. His offering here was a means by which to seek forgiveness and to show a heart of repentance. ***Greatly afraid:*** Because of his guilt that he felt over the things he had done in the past to Esau, he interpreted the band of 400 men to be an army to inflict punishment on him for the sins of the past.

32:9-12 It seems that Jacob was at this time taking a stand against what he considered an impending danger. He did not flee, knowing that with his flocks, wives and children he could not outrun 400 men. He thus, with a humble heart, placed his trust in God who had commissioned him to return to his family. God's response was the renewal of the promise that He would make his descendants as the sand of the sea.

32:13-21 Jacob made every effort to appease what he thought was the wrath of his brother. ***Appease:*** This is the first use of this word in the Bible. It is a word used in reference to the one who is seeking the forgiveness of another in order that a relationship be established between two parties. In this case, Jacob, the one who was seeking forgiveness, sought to appease the supposed wrath of his brother in order that a relationship once again be established between the two. In our relationship with God, we, through our obedience, seek to appease the judgment of God upon our sins.

32:22-32 ***A man wrestled with him:*** The man here is identified as God who wrestled with Jacob's soul. ***The socket of his thigh:*** During the wrestling, Jacob dislocated his hip. ***Bless me:*** Jacob continued the wrestling, realizing that he needed a blessing from the One with whom he wrestled. ***Israel:*** Jacob would not let the man go. As a result of the wrestling match, Jacob's name was changed to Israel, meaning, "the one who strives with God," or "the one who prevails with God." ***Peniel:*** As we, Jacob did not know exactly with

whom or what he was struggling. He did know that in some way it was a messenger from God, and thus the wrestling was with God. He named the place "Peniel," or "Penuel." Peniel means "face-to-face with God." ***Sinew of the hip:*** In case Jacob might have thought the wrestling was only a dream, his physical impairment in the hip was a reminder that the struggle was real. From the day of this struggle the descendants of Israel refrained from eating the sciatic muscle of animals. ***Now as he passed over:*** The point is that before one can face his enemies, he must first face God and reconcile his differences with God. One must struggle in repentance, and thus be on the side of God before he can be victorious over his enemies.

Chapter 33

33:1-11 Regardless of the wrestling with God and the subsequent blessing, Jacob still harbored anxiety concerning the imminent encounter with his brother. He thus separated his household into groups, making ready for the clash. ***Esau ... embraced him:*** One can only imagine what was going through Jacob's mind as his brother ran toward him and embraced him. The tremendous release of tension resulted in both men weeping before one another. ***This company:*** Reference is to the offering of the flocks that Jacob would give to Esau in order to gain his favor. He sought to buy Esau's favor. But Esau said he had enough of his own. It was like trying to buy the grace of God. God has enough. It is not for sale. It is free. ***As one sees the face of God:*** This is surely one of the greatest illustrations of the grace of God. In his former years, Jacob had dealt deceitfully with his brother Esau. He had caught Esau in a time of weakness in order to secure his birthright. He had deceived Isaac in order to receive the blessing of the firstborn. Filled with guilt and repentance, he had to face his brother. He expected nothing short of justice and retribution. But instead, as God would do, Esau ran toward Jacob with embraces and tears and forgiveness (See Lk 15:11-32). It was as Jacob said, like seeing the face of God who is a God of love and grace.

33:12-20 Since Jacob, his family and flocks, could not keep up with the pace of Esau's men, he asked to be allowed to part from Esau in order to go on to Succoth and then to Shechem (See 12:6). It was here that he set up an altar, Elelohe-Israel, meaning, "God, the God of Israel."

Chapter 34
THE RAPE OF DINAH

34:1-7 Dinah's error was in her action to go out and mingle among pagan people, and thus put herself in a social environment wherein she would be raped. Shechem, the son of a local prince, took advantage of the teenager, and thus set the stage for more evil to come. ***Get me this young girl:*** Because of his arrogant request to his father, Hamor, it is apparent that Shechem did not have any moral judgment. When Jacob heard the news of the rape, he said nothing until the family of sons could be brought together in a family council.

34:8-12 The defilement of Dinah, and Shechem's desire to marry her called for a meeting of the two families. Though the meeting was polite, the brothers of Dinah were seething for revenge. For his son, Hamor argued that Jacob and his sons would be given the privilege of intermarriage with his family, plus trade in the land and ownership of property. This offer indicated that at this time Jacob and his family were still traveling guests in the land, though they had been in the area for at least ten years.

34:13-24 ***You be circumcised:*** A scheme had already been devised by the brothers. The brothers had no intention of allowing the marriage to transpire. The plan was to have the men of Hamor in a physically incapacitated condition after their circumcision in order to strike a mortal blow. ***Will not their ... substance ... be ours:*** Hamor and Shechem's argument to the men of the city seemed to indicate that they were attempting to graft the family of Jacob into the culture of the land. The proposition may have been a good economic plan, but more than economics were involved. If Jacob and his family compromised their religious beliefs by making a covenant with the pagans of the land of Canaan, then the plan of God to keep Israel distinct from the pagan beliefs and behavior of the Canaanites would be doomed before the seedline heritage of Abraham could be developed into the nation of Israel. This was thus a temptation of Satan through Hamor and Shechem to destroy the posterity of Abraham.

34:25-31 ***They slew all the males***: The plan was a genocide against the house of Hamor. The front men were Simeon and Levi and the follow-up was carried out by the other brothers. Jacob knew nothing of the plan, and thus when he heard of what happened, he was greatly grieved. His fear now was that the other families of the Canaanites and Perizzites would form a league and come against his family. But the sons justified their actions, not on a religious basis, but on the basis of the honor of their sister, that she should not be dealt with as a harlot. The error of the two brothers, Simeon and Levi, was that they used violence to correct a problem, assuming that another evil would correct an evil. In their own posterity in the years to come, they would receive from their father, Jacob, their own punishment (See 49:5-7). As interpreters of what transpired among the descendants of Abraham, we must not conclude that God approves of any sin in the lives of individuals or group of individuals. He only uses the sin of people to turn the work of Satan against himself. The posterity of the faith of Abraham would eventually lead to the unveiling of the mystery of salvation through the Jews (Ep 3:3-5). God would turn the sin of people around in order to carry out this eventual end. But we must not conclude that God was approving the sin in the lives of Abraham's descendants. He used the sin of the descendants to carry out His eternal plan.

Chapter 35
BIRTH OF BENJAMIN,
DEATH OF RACHEL & JACOB

35:1-7 ***Bethel:*** It was here that God first appeared to Jacob on his flight from Esau. ***Put away the foreign gods:*** It seems that the influence of the Canaanites was creeping into the behavior of the children of Israel. Jacob thus took a stand for his family to cleanse themselves from all influences of the pagan religions around them. The symbols of idolatry were buried by Jacob under an oak that was by Shechem. ***Terror of God:***

Instead of the surrounding cities forming an alliance to attack Jacob and his family, they were filled with the fear of God. We must assume that these idolatrous peoples assumed that the God of Jacob was strong in allowing two men, Simeon and Levi, to overpower all the men of Hamor. Word spread fast among the people of Palestine, and thus, Jacob's fears of their attack were unfounded. Even in their superstitious beliefs, the Canaanites came to the correct conclusion that God was protecting His people.

35:8-15 God again reaffirmed the promises that were made to Abraham. From Abraham came many nations and kings (17:5,6). And now from Jacob also many nations and kings would come. God also renewed the land promise. ***Bethel:*** The name means "house of God." Jacob established a memorial of the place where God made these promises. The monument was a witness to Jacob's faith that he trusted in the promises of God, and thus walked according to the covenant of the promises.

35:16-20 Before her death in childbirth, Rachel named the son Benoni ("son of my sorrow"). But Jacob later named the son Benjamin ("son of the right hand"). Rachel was subsequently buried on the way to Bethlehem where many centuries later One would be born who would sit at the right hand of God (See Ep 1:20-23; Hb 8:1). It could have been that the change of the name was by the inspiration of God in preparation for the future. Whatever the case, the Son of Man was born in Bethlehem (Mc 5:2) and now sits at the right hand of God.

35:21-26 ***Reuben ... lay with Bilhah:*** This sin of incest against a wife of Jacob was a flagrant violation of the immediate household of Jacob. It seems that this eldest son of Jacob was showing contempt for the patriarchal authority of Jacob. Though he did nothing about this at the time, Jacob later excluded Reuben as a leader in the covenant (49:3,4). ***The sons of Jacob were:*** This list of Jacob's sons is according to their mothers (Leah and Rachel), with the sons of the handmaids (Bilhah and Zilpah) placed second. The list mentions that they were born in Padan-aram, without mentioning Benjamin who was born in Canaan. ***Jacob came to Isaac:*** Many years before these events, Isaac thought he was going to die (27:1,2). But he lived until Jacob returned from the house of Laban to be reunited with Esau, and thus, the two brothers were able to bury their father, Isaac, in peace.

Generations Of Esau
(36:1-43)

Outline: (1) The descendants of Esau (36:1 – 43)

Chapter 36
THE DESCENDANTS OF ESAU

36:1-8 ***Wives:*** It was common in Near East culture for people to change their names. In this context it is possible that Bashemath in 26:34 is the same as Adah (vs 2), and that Mahalath in 28:9 is the same as Bashemath (vs 3). Judith of 26:34 is probably different from Aholibamah in this text (vs 2). Judith, the daughter of Beeri (26:34), was either childless or died. Aholibamah possibly took her place. Her father, Anah, and grandfather, Zibeon, are listed with the Seirites (vs 20). Other texts, however, mention her as the "daughter of Anah, son of Zibeon," which is probably the correct reading. ***Hivite:*** This would better be understood as Horite (vs 20). ***Esau is Edom:*** Twice in the text this statement is made, thus emphasizing the fact that in genealogy, God seems to want Israel to understand that the descendants of Esau became the Edomites, which people fought against the children of Israel when they came out of Egyptian captivity. Edom was judged for the persecution of this brother, and thus, God eventually destroyed the nation of Edom from history.

36:9-14 This text carries on with the descendants of Esau through Eliphaz (vs 12). From his second wife he had Amalek, the descendants of whom became the enemies of the children of Israel when they immediately came out of Egyptian captivity on their way to Mt. Sinai.

36:15-19 ***Chiefs:*** Some translations have used the word "duke" to translate the Hebrew word *alluf*. The word "prince" has also been used. However, the fathers mentioned here established extended families, each family being led by a patriarch or chief.

36:20-30 The Horites were already in the land before the arrival of Esau. What seems to have happened is that the descendants of Esau intermarried with the Horites. By the time this information is written by Moses after the Egyptian exodus, it seems that this intermarriage had already been completed, and thus the Edomites were a mixture of the descendants from Esau with the Horites.

36:31-43 ***Before any king reigned there over the children of Israel:*** This statement has been used to affirm that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but by someone who lived during the days there were kings in Israel, which would have been after the kingship of Saul, the first king of Israel. The argument assumes, however, that there were no kings reigning in Edom at the time of Moses. There is no archaeological evidence to prove there were no kings in Edom at the time of Moses. Consider also the fact that there would have been no reason for God to tarry in writing the Pentateuch books until after the reign of Saul, whose reign was in the 11th century B.C. It is not reasonable to conclude that God would leave Israel without the Pentateuch from the time of the exodus from Egypt (1445 B.C.) to the time after the kings were established in Israel, the time of Saul and following. The fact that verse 31 mentions the "kings of Israel" would be explained in the fact that through inspiration Moses inscribed these words. God knew that Israel would eventually want a king, and thus He gave instructions for the reign of this king. By inspiration of Moses, God here mentions the kings that would come before they existed.

Generations Of Jacob
(37:1 - 50:26)

Outline: (1) Joseph and his brothers (37:1-28), (2) Joseph goes to Egypt (37:29-36), (3) Relationship between Judah and Tamar (38:1-30), (4) Joseph and Potiphar's wife (39:1-23), (5) Joseph in prison (40:1-23), (6) Pharaoh's dreams (41:1-57), (7) First visit of Joseph's brothers (42:1-38), (8) Second visit of Joseph's brothers (43:1-34), (9) Benjamin brought to Joseph (44:1-34), (10) Joseph reveals himself (45:1-15), (11) Jacob's move to Egypt (45:16 – 46:27), (12)

Jacob's family settles in Goshen (46:28 – 47:12), (13) Joseph's administration of Egypt (47:13-26), (14) Last days of Jacob (47:27 – 50:14), (15) Last years of Joseph (50:15-26)

Chapter 37
JOSEPH & HIS BROTHERS

37:1-4 The book of Genesis now turns from the life of Jacob to focus on the circumstances surrounding the life of Joseph. The important lesson of Joseph's life is that God can use the unrighteous behavior of those who surround a righteous man in order to work out something for the good of His cause. In the case of Joseph we must understand the greater picture, that God was working in order to take the descendants of Jacob into Egypt where He would build them into a great nation of people. ***Israel loved Joseph more:*** The beginning of the problems in Joseph's life started with a father who favored one child over another. Jacob had suffered the same in the family of his father Isaac (25:28), and now he is doing the same with Joseph in reference to the other sons. In Joseph's case, the problem seems to have been exemplified when Jacob gave him the special gift of the coat of many colors, or ornaments. Another lesson is in the fact that if Jacob would have spent as much time with all his sons as he did with Joseph, they too would have had the faith of Joseph that kept him close to God throughout his ordeals.

37:5-8 The first dream of Joseph was correctly understood by the brothers, that they would give obeisance to Joseph. The truth of the dream was that he would eventually reign over them.

37:9-11 The second dream reemphasized the meaning of the first dream, though portrayed by the sun, moon and stars of heaven. The first dream generated hate in the heart of the brothers, and this second dream stirred a rebuke even from Jacob and envy in the hearts of the brothers. God knew that the brothers would have hateful reactions to the dreams, and thus, we must conclude that God was setting the stage for what He knew the brothers would do in selling Joseph to Midianite traders who would take him to Egypt. The lesson is that God also works through unfortunate circumstances in order to accomplish His will in our lives.

37:12-17 ***Shechem:*** It was in this city that Simeon and Levi slew all the men of the city. Jacob is somewhat worried about his sons being in this area, and thus sent Joseph to see how they were faring. By the time of Joseph's arrival, however, they had moved on to Dothan.

37:18-22 ***They conspired:*** The conspiracy of all the brothers, except for the eldest, Reuben, was murder. With this act of aggression, they believed they would terminate the possible fulfillment of Joseph's dreams, that he would reign over them and they would be obedient to his commands. However, Reuben sought to save Joseph, and thus talked the other brothers into casting Joseph into a pit, or cistern, from where he would later secretly restore him to his father. Unfortunately, the other brothers sold Joseph when Reuben was not present.

37:23-28 ***Ishmaelites:*** These traveling merchants were taking their products on to Egypt, which products were used for the embalming work and medicine of Egypt. ***Midianites:*** This was another name for the Ishmaelites, who were descendants of Abraham through Ishmael who lived in most of the area of Arabia (See also Jg 8:22,24). ***Twenty pieces of silver:*** These were pieces of metal that were weighed in a balance (Compare Lv 27:3-7). The common price of a slave during the time of Moses was thirty pieces of silver (See Ex 21:32; Zc 11:12, compare Mt 26:15).

JOSEPH GOES TO EGYPT

37:29-36 Reuben was grieved concerning the sale of Joseph. The deceit of the other brothers was continued by a lie to the father. ***Sackcloth:*** This was a rough goat's hair material that was worn in times of grief or repentance. ***His father wept:*** The brothers witnessed the tremendous impact of the loss of Joseph on their father. They sought to comfort him, but failed to do the one thing that would have comforted the father, that is, tell the truth. If they told the truth, they possibly thought that their father would send them to Egypt to reclaim Joseph. Whatever the case, their hearts were hardened both against Joseph and in their relationship with their father.

Chapter 38
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUDAH & TAMAR

38:1-11 This interlude of genealogical information happened at the time of Joseph's venture into Egypt. It is given here by Moses in order to list an important link in the family genealogy of Israel through Judah. Another reason for the inclusion of this affair was to give Israel a history of how immoral and idolatrous fornication brought immorality and idolatry into Israel. This event begins by Judah going out among the Canaanites, where he married a Canaanite woman. ***Go in to your brother's wife:*** The levirate marriage law was widely practiced in Near East cultures. The purpose of the practice was to preserve the heritage of a brother who died without sons to carry on his posterity. If an older brother died, then it was the duty of the next living brother to go into the widow, the dead brother's wife, and bear children by the widow for the sake of continuing the posterity of the dead brother. The children of the dead brother's wife would have all legal rights to the deceased's property, and subsequently carry on the family lineage of the dead brother (See Lv 21:9; Dt 22:5-24; see Ruth 1:11-13; 4:5-11). In this case, Onan refused to carry out the levirate responsibility, and thus suffered the judgment of God.

38:12-23 It seems that Tamar sought for Shelah to be given to her as a husband in order to carry on the heritage of Er. But she was denied Shelah. So she schemed a plan to entice Judah into bearing children through her for the sake of Er. ***Signet and cord:*** Both of these carried the name or insignia of its owner. Because her purpose for enticing Judah to lie with her was not for money, but to continue the heritage of Er, Tamar was not interested in the payment of a common harlot, but in evidence that would later positively identify Judah as the one with whom she would conceive. ***Harlot:*** The word here is different than the word translated "harlot" in verses 15 & 24 where the word means a professional street harlot. Here reference is to one who gives herself to sexual rites in honor of a pagan god.

38:24-26 ***Let her be burned:*** Judah was infuriated that Tamar had violated his instructions. It seems that he was furious with her in that she had also played the part of a harlot, thus mocking the family in such actions. ***Burned:*** See Lv 20:10. ***More righteous than I:*** As it turned out, the problem of Shelah continuing the heritage of Er was not with Tamar, but with Judah. Though Tamar had given herself to the affair with Judah in order to accomplish a legally justified objective, she still was not innocent in the matter. However, Judah had to bear the greater responsibility because he had refused to carry out his legal duty in providing Shelah for Tamar. Both had behaved wrongly, but Judah had to bear the greater responsibility.

38:27-30 ***Perez:*** The name means "to make a breach" or "to forge through." The purpose for the record of the incident between Judah and Tamar is revealed in the fact that through Perez came Boaz, and then David, and eventually the Christ (1 Ch 2:3-15; Mt 1:3-16; Lk 3:23-33).

Chapter 39
JOSEPH & POTIPHAR'S WIFE

39:1-6 The promise of God to Abraham that he would be a blessing to others was here continued through Joseph. Potiphar's house was greatly blessed because of the presence of Joseph. Throughout the following story of Joseph in Egypt, the work of God in the life of the righteous is clearly evident. Because of his great faith, Joseph remained positive in life, and thus did not mourn over his predicament or environment. He did not blame God for his situation. There is no self-pity in his character. ***Left all ... in Joseph's hand:*** When those of the world witness the honesty and integrity of the righteous, they will entrust the righteous with great responsibility. Advancement in the world comes through the integrity of righteous behavior, not deceptive schemes.

39:7-18 ***Lie with me:*** Potiphar's wife was without morals and marital commitment to her husband. She did not care for the consequences of her wicked actions, and thus propositioned a righteous man for her own satisfaction. ***Left his garment:*** Not only was the woman immoral, but she was a liar. The garment thus became the evidence that Joseph was in her presence, but was not evidence that he had made any advances toward her.

39:19,20 ***Put him in prison:*** The fact that Joseph was not immediately killed for the supposed immoral advance on Potiphar's wife seems to indicate that Potiphar was not completely convinced that his wife was telling the truth. Instead of death, therefore, Joseph was sent to prison. Since Potiphar was a royal officer, Joseph was put in a special prison that was a better environment than the prisons for the common slaves.

39:21-23 ***Committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners:*** This is the second time God providentially moved Joseph into a situation where he could be prepared for the eventual supervision of all Egypt under Pharaoh, and thus the fulfillment of the dreams of his youth. He first had the opportunity to prepare for leadership in Potiphar's house. He is now given the opportunity to learn even while in prison. He evidently manifested in his behavior great leadership abilities, which abilities were used by those he encountered. It could have been that it was this leadership that Joseph's brothers saw in him even at the age of seventeen, leadership abilities that intimidated them, for they knew the dreams of Joseph that they would eventually give obeisance to him. They knew that if Joseph continued to grow in his leadership abilities, they would indeed eventually bow down to him. The lesson is that leadership ability often intimidates those who would presume to be leaders. Those who are thus insecure or arrogant, often reject the leadership ability that is manifested in great leaders. One should not be jealous of those to whom God has given abilities to lead.

Chapter 40
JOSEPH IN PRISON

40:1-23 These dreams were sent from God in order to give Joseph an opportunity to be delivered out of prison and seated before the Pharaoh of Egypt. They were dreams given in order to fulfill Joseph's previous prophetic dreams. Joseph's deliverance did not immediately happen because the cupbearer, in his excitement in being delivered from prison, forgot Joseph. However, Joseph was eventually delivered from prison after two years. Each dream came to pass according to the interpretation that was given by Joseph, and thus the stage was set for Joseph to be released from prison once God again made the opportunity for the interpretation of a dream, which dream would eventually come to Pharaoh. We would assume that God was delaying the rise of Joseph to prominent power in Egypt until certain events transpired in Palestine with Jacob and his sons. We must always keep in mind in our interpretation of these events that God was working everything together for the purpose of bringing the household of Jacob into Egypt, and keeping the household there for four hundred years until He would take them back to the land of Palestine in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. All that He did was for the purpose of preserving the seedline of Abraham in order to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. Behind the scenes that are playing out in this history is God's eternal plan to send His Son into this world.

Chapter 41
PHARAOH'S DREAMS

41:1-8 Pharaoh's dreams of the cows and ears (a reference to some type of grain) could have been interpreted by Pharaoh's advisors if they were inspired. However, even in their simplicity the interpretation of the dreams was too great for Pharaoh's presumptuous men. To their credit, however, it was obvious that they knew the interpretation was generally not favorable. Mixed with seven years of plenty, there would be seven years of famine. The Egyptians considered Pharaoh to be the sun god, but here he could not even interpret his own dreams.

41:9-32 ***God will give Pharaoh an answer:*** Two years after his release from prison, the butler remembered the one who gave interpretations from God. Both of Pharaoh's dreams referred to the future condition of the crops and condition of Egypt. There would be seven years of abundant harvest and seven years of famine. What would occur would be a drought many kilometers to the south of Egypt toward the source of the Nile River. The farms of Egypt were watered by the

overflowing waters of the Nile, the longest river in the world. There was always little rain in Egypt, and thus all crops in Egypt depended on the overflowing waters of the Nile. When a drought occurred in the regions where the Nile received its water from countless tributaries to the south, then the river would not overflow by the time it reached Egyptian soil.

41:33-43 With the interpretation came also advice from Joseph. This would be only natural from one who had the skills of leadership in organizing people. Joseph organized people in Potiphar's house and in prison. Pharaoh knew that the interpretation was true. He thus took off his ring of authority and gave it to Joseph. This gave Joseph the authority to act on behalf of Pharaoh in organizing the harvest of the good years in preparation for the coming famine years. ***The second chariot:*** In order to inaugurate Joseph to his position before the people, a public display of Joseph's position was indicated through the fact that he was publicly paraded before the people in the chariot behind Pharaoh's. Thus Pharaoh made Joseph the ruler over all Egypt. The stage was now set for the fulfillment of Joseph's own dreams that he had when he was a boy in Palestine that his brothers would bow before him.

41:44-57 Since Joseph was seventeen when he entered Egypt, and at the time of this event he was thirty, he had been in Egypt for thirteen years, at least two of which he was in prison. ***Asenath:*** Through his wife, Asenath, he had two sons. Manasseh ("forgetting") was so named in that by this time Joseph had forgotten the sad events that brought him to Egypt. Ephraim ("double fruitfulness") was so named because God had exalted Joseph to a greater position than what he could have had if he had stayed with his family in Palestine. The name could also have been given in view of the fact that Joseph was placed in a position where he was able to save many lives through his skillful planning during the time of the Egyptian famine. ***On:*** This was the city of the sun god that was later called Heliopolis. ***Famine was over all ... the earth:*** These years of famine did not only strike the nation of Egypt, but every nation in the region of Egypt. In view of what happened with the family of Jacob, we would conclude that God is the one who caused the famine. God meant to take the children of Israel into Egypt for four hundred years while the wickedness of the Canaanites increased. Since there was already some inner marriage with the Canaanites going on in the lives of Jacob's family, God's plan was to extract the family from Canaan in order to preserve the posterity of Abraham. In Egypt, they would be separated from the Egyptians in the land of Goshen, and thus the purity of Abraham's seed through Jacob would be guarded from the evil influence of the immoral and idolatrous culture of Canaan. Since it was the work of God to get the household of Jacob to Egypt, we would conclude that God works through many events in order to carry out His purpose.

Chapter 42
FIRST VISIT OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

42:1-5 ***There is grain in Egypt:*** From what Jacob said in the statement of verse 1, it seems that he thought his sons should have come up with this idea. It may be that the sons still remembered that Egypt was where they sent their brother Joseph many years before, and thus they wanted to stay away from the land. They are no doubt still suffering from guilt for what they did with Joseph and their lie to their father concerning Joseph's supposed death.

42:6-24 ***Bowed themselves down before him:*** And so the dream of the young man Joseph was fulfilled. ***Spoke roughly ... spies:*** Because of the character of Joseph, it is hard to think that he was seeking vengeance by his conduct. Because he had to make an effort to speak roughly indicates that he was not this type of person. It seems from his first encounter with his brothers that it was his intent to see his father. He could have made the accusation that they were spies in order to keep one of them in custody to force their return to Egypt. ***His blood is now required of us:*** The brothers had for years lived with the guilt of what they had done to their brother Joseph. Reuben now states that it was time to reap the whirlwind of justice. He reminded them that they had imprisoned Joseph, and now they were imprisoned in the country to which they had sold their brother. ***Simeon:*** We do not know exactly why Simeon was chosen other than the fact that it may have been Simeon who had years before instigated the plan to have Joseph sold to Midianite traders.

42:25-34 Joseph may have had their money placed in their sacks of grain as a benevolent gesture, but the brothers interpreted it as an act of God's judgment on them. Since Simeon was held as a hostage in an Egyptian prison, they had to return to Egypt. But they did not know how to deal with the returned money.

42:35-38 ***You have bereaved me:*** In Jacob's response to all that had transpired concerning their trip to Egypt, he accused them for being responsible for the loss of Joseph and the imprisonment of Simeon. And now they were threatening the life of Benjamin. Though Reuben had offered his two sons as hostages, Jacob's distrust of his sons still would not allow him to release Benjamin into their care.

Chapter 43
SECOND VISIT OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

43:1-14 The brothers did not immediately return to Egypt after their first return to Jacob, their father. So Simeon had to languish in prison until the need for more food demanded that they return to Egypt. ***Judah:*** It is now Judah who makes a plea to Jacob that Benjamin must be sent with them to Egypt. After much persuasion, Jacob finally agrees to allow Benjamin to go. The famine must have been so severe that Jacob knew that it was now a life and death situation in Palestine. ***Best fruits:*** They had a water supply from wells by which they could produce a garden of fruits. But if they did not secure the grain from Egypt, surely all their livestock would perish, and eventually, they themselves would be in danger of starvation.

43:15-25 Joseph sensed that the attitudes of the brothers had changed, for certainly they came with contrite attitudes in reference to what they had to do. ***These men will dine with me:*** The brothers were certainly mystified by the actions of Joseph. Because they could not comprehend what was happening, they were afraid. Once the brothers explained

that their money had been placed in their sacks on the previous journey, the steward of Joseph reassured them that he had placed the money in the sacks. This surely confounded the anxious brothers as they waited in anticipation for a meeting with Joseph at noon.

43:26-34 ***Is this your younger brother:*** Being informed that this was Benjamin from Rachel his own mother, Joseph was overcome with emotion. He hurried out from the presence of the brothers in order to weep for joy in finally seeing his brother after so many years. ***Abomination to the Egyptians:*** The Egyptians were a proud people. In this setting, therefore, the Hebrews, who were considered a lower class of people because they were shepherds, were not allowed to sit with Egyptians. It is also believed that as shepherds, the Hebrews ate some animals that the Egyptians considered sacred. ***The men looked in astonishment at one another:*** What else could we expect from such an encounter. Their minds are filled with questions and confusion, for they did not understand their presence at this meal with someone who had previously treated them so harshly. ***Benjamin's serving:*** In order to show preference, Joseph gave more to his full brother, Benjamin, the son of his mother, Rachel (See 1 Sm 1:5).

Chapter 44
BENJAMIN BROUGHT TO JOSEPH

44:1-13 ***The sack of the youngest:*** It seems that Joseph is working a scheme that is based on his understanding of how his brothers behaved many years before, that they were dishonest in their dealings. And thus his plan is to force them to bring their father to him in Egypt. Feelings for revenge would be unlikely since Joseph had long forgotten his Palestinian family by the time of the birth of his children. He realized that if he had not been sold into Egypt he would not be where he was. Of course, it is probable that Joseph was teaching his brothers a lesson that would change their lives forever. They had delayed in returning to Egypt after the first visit, thus giving the impression that they had abandoned Simeon in prison. But he also concluded that his father was unwilling to come to Egypt. With this maneuver, therefore, Joseph would be trying to teach them a lesson, as well as bring his father into Egypt. In all things that Joseph did with his brothers throughout these events, we must not forget that Joseph now believed that it was God who wanted him to be sold into Egypt.

44:14-17 The brothers were certainly devastated by the discovery of the cup in Benjamin's sack. In their bitter agony, they offered themselves as slaves. Joseph extended mercy by saying that they could leave, but Benjamin had to stay. ***God has found out:*** God always knows our sins. We lead ourselves to believe that at the time we reap the consequences of our sins it is only then that He discovers our sin.

44:18-34 ***Judah came near:*** It was now time for confession and pleading for mercy. Judah related what transpired in getting their father to allow Benjamin to come to Egypt. His pleas to the Egyptian ruler who now had control over their destinies was that the father of Benjamin would surely die if the young son did not return to his father. Judah then confessed to Joseph the whole truth concerning their sin in reference to the other son of Jacob with which they had dealt wickedly twenty-two years before. Judah thus made an emotional appeal to the heart of one he thought was an unmerciful Egyptian ruler. Judah continued his appeal to the point of offering himself as a slave to the one he had many years before sold into slavery. He was willing to give himself into slavery for the sake of another. He had indeed changed throughout the years, and thus stood before Joseph a repentant man.

Chapter 45
JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF

45:1-15 ***Joseph said:*** At this time Joseph spoke to them in their Canaanite language, which in itself would have shocked the brothers (See 43:23). ***I am Joseph:*** The drama of the play was over. Joseph was convinced by Judah's plea that his brothers were no longer the heartless men who had sold him into slavery. They were changed men who had a deep concern for one another and their father. Through great tears of compassion, therefore, he revealed himself to his astonished brothers who were shocked beyond speech. They were stunned in silence. The scene brings tears to our eyes as the brother who had been gone for over twenty years had now revealed himself to his family. ***God sent me before you to preserve life:*** And now we know how and why God turned Satan's work through the brothers to sell Joseph into His purpose of preserving the posterity of Israel. It is apparent that at some point in the past God revealed to Joseph what his mission in Egypt was. ***God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant:*** It seems that God had revealed to Joseph the purpose for which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been called out of the nations of the world (12:1-3). A remnant of humanity was to be preserved for a reason yet to be revealed centuries later, which reason was still a mystery. But at least Joseph knew that his presence in Egypt was not just the result of the heartless actions of his brothers who sold him many years before (50:20). God was taking the work of Satan and turning it against him in order to bring about a greater purpose, the preservation of the nation of Israel that would be born in the land of Egypt. ***He kissed all his brothers:*** The drama of the reconciliation remains a lesson for all. The brothers had to first face their sin of the past (42:21,22). They had to endure the punishment of their guilt (42:28). Their inability to deal with their own guilt had to move them to plead for mercy (44:27-32). And finally, they had to manifest in their lives that they were truly sorry for the sin of selling their brother into slavery (44:33,34). Their repentance needed to be manifested through deed.

JACOB'S MOVE TO EGYPT

45:16-28 Because Pharaoh esteemed Joseph greatly, he issued a royal dictate that everything possible be done in order to bring Joseph's family into the best of the land of Egypt. Since the Egyptians considered anyone from the Canaanite area to be an abomination, this was certainly a benevolent gesture on the part of the Pharaoh (See 43:32). Wagons of goods were provided in order that the entire family of Jacob be brought from Palestine into the land of Goshen, the most fertile pasture land of Egypt. ***Jacob their father revived:*** The initial news of

Joseph was at first shocking and unbelievable for Jacob. But once the truth started to be comprehended, he revived. In the report, the repentant brothers revealed the truth of their sin which they had committed many years before when they sold their brother into slavery. But once it was understood that the work was of God, repentance and forgiveness changed this family forever, and thus laid the foundation upon which a nation could be built. It would be a nation that would need to repent many times.

Chapter 46

46:1-7 ***Make of you a great nation:*** In this revelation to Jacob everyone was reassured that the years of drama that were brought on by the selling of Joseph, Joseph's promotion in Egypt, and the famine were all in the plan of God to preserve a remnant and build a nation. After over 400 years they would leave Egypt (15:13,14).

46:8-27 See 36:1-43. The genealogy of this section lists the descendants of Jacob according to mothers. The number of descendants is listed according to children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The total of sixty-six omits Jacob, Joseph and his two sons, thus the final total is seventy people. The wives are not included in the total, but one daughter and granddaughter are included. In Acts 7:14 Stephen mentions that seventy-five people of Jacob's family moved to Egypt. Stephen refers to the Greek Septuagint which included the five grandsons of Joseph, thus making the seventy-five people from whom the entire nation of Israel would be born in the land of Egypt.

JACOB'S FAMILY SETTLES IN GOSHEN

46:28-34 ***Now let me die:*** Jacob had now realized the fulfillment of God's promise that from him a great nation would be born. While in Canaan he surely saw that the influence of the Canaanite immorality and idolatry would soon creep into his descendants, and thus they would vanish from history as they assimilated into the cultures around them**.** But in Egypt, things would be different. ***Land of Goshen:*** Judah now assumed his role of leadership by taking the lead to resettle the house of Jacob in Egypt. Joseph led in determining the place of settlement. Goshen was the delta region of the Nile River. It was the best pasture lands of the entire nation (See 45:10; 47:11,12). ***Shepherds:*** In the sight of Egyptians, shepherds were of the low class of people, and thus were an abomination to the Egyptians. The Egyptians had shepherds, but they were not allowed into the heart of Egypt. They took care of Pharaoh's livestock in the area of Goshen. Jacob's family was given the eastern border area of Goshen that would border with the Canaanite territory of Palestine.

Chapter 47

47:1-12 Joseph was able to allow Jacob and his family to enter Egypt, but permission to reside in the land had to come from Pharaoh. Joseph thus followed customary procedures in order to receive the permission of Pharaoh for the permanent dwelling of his father's household in Egypt. ***If you know of any capable men:*** This is Pharaoh's invitation that the Israelites become a part of the Egyptian economy. Since the Egyptians considered shepherds a lower class of society, and Goshen the land for pastures, then there would be no threat to the Egyptian economy or culture from the Semitic shepherds of Israel. ***How old are you:*** It is interesting that Pharaoh asked this question of Jacob. Since Joseph had said that he was as "a father to Pharaoh," we might assume that Pharaoh was younger than Joseph. But the age of Jacob certainly intrigued Pharaoh. All of Pharaoh's fathers died according to the "three score and ten" the common life span of men. But here in his presence was a man who was 130 years old, a young age in reference to Jacob's forefathers. This certainly puzzled the young Pharaoh who was considered a god-king of the land of Egypt. ***Land of Rameses:*** In this region, in the northeastern part of Goshen, a city would eventually be built that would be named after Rameses II (See Ex 1:11).

JOSEPH'S ADMINISTRATION OF EGYPT

47:13-26 The seven years of famine established the economic foundation upon which Pharaoh possessed the land of Egypt. Previous to the famine, there existed in the economy the right of private land ownership, with the priests being granted land directly from Pharaoh. As the famine progressed, however, private land was turned over to Pharaoh in order to purchase grain, and thus, the former landowners became tenants of the land. The famine, therefore, brought the house of Pharaoh into control of all the land of Egypt. Throughout the famine, it is significant to note that the people did not expect Pharaoh to just hand out free grain for the survival of the people. The Egyptian people had enough integrity to sell what they had in order to buy the grain. There was no dependency thinking in the minds of the people that the "government" should take care of them. For this reason, the Egyptian culture was one of the great cultures of the ancient world. ***One fifth:*** This twenty percent tax is less than many countries today. It set a new law of tax that provided for the function of Pharaoh's house, as well as provide an opportunity for people to function in a free-market economy. What they earned from their free-market work was theirs, except for the twenty percent tax that was to be paid to the government of Pharaoh. The taxes to Pharaoh supported a government that protected them in the land.

LAST DAYS OF JACOB

47:27-31 God blessed Jacob with seventeen more years of life in order that he might see the great growth of his household as God began to fulfill His promise that from him would come a great nation. ***I will lie with my fathers:*** Jacob now made Joseph promise that he would be buried in the land that was promised to his fathers (28:13-15; 35:11,12). Once the promise was made by Joseph, then Jacob could die in peace.

Chapter 48

48:1-22 ***Your two sons ... are mine:*** God had appeared to Jacob in Bethel (Luz, 28:10-22). Now the covenant promises were to be continued throughout his posterity. In order to do this, Jacob had to first claim the two sons of Joseph as part of this posterity. In doing so, he elevated the two sons

of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, to the level of his eleven other sons. ***Redeemed me:*** This is the first time that the word "redeem" is used in the Bible. Its meaning is seated in the custom laws where kinsmen were obligated to buy back the mortgaged property of a relative who had lost it through unfortunate circumstances. The word also signifies that a relative was obligated to buy back a relative who had given himself as a slave in order to repay his debt (See Lv 25:25-55). Jacob had seen the work of God to redeem him from his own mischief in deceiving both Esau for his birthright and Isaac for the blessing that was due Esau. Because he had been brought to Egypt in the company of his son, Joseph, Jacob had witnessed the redemptive work of God. ***His younger brother will be greater:*** In his blindness, Jacob knew by the direction of God that Manasseh was the firstborn. However, the descendants of Ephraim would be greater. In blessing Ephraim, Jacob made Ephraim the representative of the covenant. ***Land of your fathers:*** Though Jacob was only a sojourner in the land of Canaan, he trusted in God's promises to the extent that now he had claimed it as the land of the fathers, Abraham and Isaac, those to whom the land was promised. ***One portion above your brothers:*** Joseph's portion of the promised land would be located near Shechem, which land Jacob had taken in a battle with the Amorites. This conflict is not recorded in Scripture. It was here that Jacob was buried (Jn 4:5,6; see Ja 24:32).

Chapter 49

49:1-28 These final prophetic utterances of Jacob were given in poetic Hebrew parallelisms that are seated in rich metaphors. Their fulfillment would come about only in the descendants of each particular son. ***Reuben:*** Though the firstborn of Jacob, Reuben should have retained his legal leadership of the sons. However, through an act of immoral incest he defiled his father's bed (35:22). He had forfeited his honored position through an act of immorality. ***Simeon and Levi:*** As a team, they had massacred the men of Shechem (34:25-29). Neither of these two sons would have a designated tribal territory, but would be scattered among the other tribes (Ja 19:1-9; 21:1-42). ***Judah:*** Because he had shown his leadership maturity, Judah would eventually be the dominant military and political leader of the nation of Israel. ***Until Shiloh comes:*** Royalty would come from Judah (See 1 Sm 16:1-13; 2 Sm 2:1-4; 5:1-5). It is not clear what the specific meaning of the word "Shiloh" is, either "rest" or "rest giver," but both Christian and Jewish scholars have affirmed that this verse is a prophetic reference to the Messiah. Christians have affirmed that the prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but Jews are still awaiting the coming of their messiah. ***Zebulun:*** The descendants of Zebulun would be sea merchants. ***Issachar:*** Since the descendants of Issachar did not drive out the Canaanites from Palestine when Israel returned to the land, they eventually became the slaves of the Canaanites (Jg 1:30). ***Dan:*** Though the name Dan means "judge," his descendants would be known for their treachery and deception against Israel's enemies. ***Gad:*** Though raiders would overcome these descendants, they would eventually be victorious. ***Naphtali:*** In his freedom, the posterity of Naphtali would be poetic in their communication with others. ***Joseph:*** Though he at first suffered tragedy in his life, God would continue to care for this son of Jacob, and thus, he would be greatly blessed because of his suffering. ***Benjamin:*** As a ravenous wolf, the descendants of Benjamin were known for their swordsmen and left-handed stone slingers (Jg 20:15,16). As illustrated with King Saul, a Benjaminite, they would defeat their enemies (See 1 Sm 14:46).

49:29-33 ***Cave ... in the field of Machpelah:*** Jacob's desire was to be buried in the cave that Abraham purchased (23:1-20). The desire to be buried with his ancestors in Canaan was meant to remind his sons that Canaan would eventually be their land as a possession.

Chapter 50

50:1-14 Jacob was embalmed for burial after the tradition of the Egyptians. Embalming originated in Egypt. The vital organs were removed from the body, but were buried in a jar with the body. The cavity of the body was filled with preserving salt. Myrrh and spices were added for scent. The body was tightly wrapped with layers of cloth and encased as a mummy in a stone or wooden coffin, depending on either the wealth or royalty of the person. As an embalmed mummy, Jacob's body was thus preserved for the long journey to the cave in the field of Machpelah near Shechem. Permission was granted from Pharaoh for Joseph to take his father for burial. The uniqueness of the event was magnified in the fact that a delegation of Egyptians also went on this journey with the family. During the seven days of mourning, the Canaanites also witnessed the mourning of the Egyptians, for they viewed the burial delegation as an Egyptian burial.

LAST YEARS OF JOSEPH

50:15-21 The guilt of what Joseph's brothers had done to him in selling him into slavery still lingered in their minds. Such is the nature of sin. Though forgiveness can be granted, one's own guilt will stay with him until his grave. Sin builds a library of guilt in the mind of the transgressor. ***Fell down before his face:*** See 37:5-8. ***Am I in God's place:*** The brothers' motives were evil when they sold Joseph into slavery. They still could not feel that God could use their evil for the purpose of His good. As the moral leadership of those in power sets the standard by which the people determine their morality, at least at the end of their lives, the sons of Jacob set a high standard of a contrite heart for their posterity to follow.

50:22-26 ***God will surely ... bring you out of this land:*** In reminding his brothers that Egypt was not their homeland, but the promised land of Canaan, he asked them for an oath that his body also be carried out of Egypt to the land of their fathers. Joseph was thus embalmed and placed in a coffin, in preparation for the time over 400 years later when the great nation of Israel would walk for freedom from Egyptian captivity. In his statement, Joseph was renewing the promise that was made to Abraham, that God would give them a land for a possession of their own. However, they had to be providentially kept in the land of Goshen until the wickedness of the Canaanites was full, and thus the land was ready to be cleansed of the wickedness of the Canaanites.

Exodus

WRITER

The writer who was inspired to write this Old Testament document was Moses (See Ex 17:14). We have no reason to doubt Jesus' statement that Moses was indeed the writer (Mk 1:44; see Jn 5:46,47; 7:19-22; At 26:22). Moses lived his first forty years in Egypt in preparation to carry out God's plan to lead Israel out of Egyptian captivity. Being reared in the Egyptian palace by the daughter of Pharaoh, Moses was trained in all the skills of Egyptian leadership. When he fled for refuge to the wilderness, Moses spent another forty years in learning the skills of desert dwelling at the feet of his father-in-law, Jethro. Once called by God to deliver Israel, Moses then spent another forty years using his skills of leadership to lead the freed nation of Israel to the promised land (See also intro. to Gn).

BOOK

The key thought of this book is "deliverance." Chapter 3:7,8 indicates the purpose of the book and 12:13 explains how God redeemed Israel out of captivity.

The word "Exodus" means "to go out." The name comes from the name of the book in the Greek Septuagint, though the Jews referred to the book with the word "*Shemoth*" which means "names."

It is commonly assumed that the Pentateuch, including Exodus, was written during the wandering of Israel in the wilderness, prior to the entrance of the nation into Canaan. The book was thus written sometime between 1,445 and 1,400 B.C.

This book is a continuation of the history of the book of Genesis. The history of the book begins with the death of Joseph, and continues to the time when the tabernacle was set up at the foot of Mt. Sinai. From the death of Joseph, to the erection of the tabernacle at the foot of Mt. Sinai, would be a period of about 360 years. When studying the book of Exodus, it is important to understand the book of Genesis, since God's work with mankind is continued in Exodus.

It might be said that the book of Exodus is a metaphor of God's redemptive work with all mankind. The literal definition of the metaphor "redemption" is found in the nation of Israel that was in bondage in Egypt. The Israelites could not deliver themselves. It was necessary, therefore, that through His grace, God redeemed Israel from their bondage. As the children of Abraham by faith, all believers have been delivered by the grace of God from their bondage in sin (See 1 Co 10:1-12). Exodus is thus the book of redemption in the Old Testament, explaining how God delivers His people from that which they cannot deliver themselves.

Because the book is about the deliverance of Israel from the captivity of Israel, the historical event, and its metaphorical application, set the prophetic stage for illustrations that are used in reference to the Redeemer, Jesus, who was yet to come in history after the exodus of Israel from Egypt. Moses was a deliverer, lawgiver and prophet, and so would be the Christ (Dt 18:15-18). In this book the Passover lamb is sacrificed, which sacrifice Jesus would also make for the sins of men in the future (Ex 12:6; 1 Co 5:7,8). Living bread was given to sustain Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16:4), and such Jesus would spiritually be to all those who would come to Him (Jn 6:48-51). Moses smote the rock from which Israel drank living water in the wilderness (Ex 17:6). Jesus is now the living water from which we drink and live (1 Co 10:4). The veil of the physical tabernacle was that through which Jesus spiritually went for the atonement of our sins (Hb 10:19,20). He passed through the veil as our high priest. This was a type from Aaron under the Levitical system who went every year into the Most Holy Place for the atonement of the sins of the people (Ex 28:36-41; Hb 7:23-28; 9:11).

Israel In Bondage In Egypt
(1:1 - 5:23)

Outline: (1) Oppression of Israel (1:1-22), (2) Birth and early life of Moses (2:1 – 4:31), (3) Oppression of Israel (5:1-23)

Chapter 1
OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL

1:1-7 ***These are the names:*** God knows His people by name (See 6:14-26; Gn 35:23-26; 46:8-26). The eleven people mentioned here (vs 2-4), with Joseph who was already in Egypt at the time of their arrival, make up the twelve sons of Jacob. ***Joseph died, and all his brothers:*** This is the natural passing of the leadership of the nation of Israel. The legacy of the leadership of these brothers was at this time passed on to their children. The successful spiritual leadership of the fathers is made known by the spiritual leadership of their children. In this case, after their repentance, it seems that Joseph's brothers left a good legacy for their sons to follow. ***Increased***

abundantly: This was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, that his children would be as the stars of heaven (Gn 12:2; 15:5; 17:1-8). By the time of the exodus from Egypt, there were about 600,000 men in Israel. Including women and children, there could have been as many as 3,000,000 who left Egypt in the exodus (See 12:37). ***Exceedingly mighty:*** Not only did they increase in number, but the phrase here seems to indicate that they were a nation of health, vigor, and thus physical strength (See Dt 26:5). ***The land was filled:*** This poses the first threat to Pharoah. The land of Goshen that was first given to Israel in Egypt had at this time become greatly populated with the mighty nation of Israel. Through the help of God, Israel greatly increased in numbers, and thus became a threat to the nation of Egypt.

1:8-14 The strength of the nation of Israel moved the new king of Egypt to take measures to oppress those he assumed would be a threat to Egypt. The great strength of Israel intimidated the king of Egypt. ***New king ... did not know Joseph:*** The Hyksos dynasty, which dynasty was composed of foreign kings, ruled Egypt from about 1720 to 1570 B.C. It was probably during this dynasty of Pharaohs (kings) that Joseph came to power in Egypt. However, the "new king," or 18th dynasty of Egypt, disassociated Egypt from the former kings and those with whom they associated. Under this new dynasty of kings, therefore, Israel, as a part of the past of Egypt, was subjected to slavery. When the nationalism of Egypt was stirred up by the reign of Egyptian kings, the Israelites were made foreigners in the land of their birth. Though in Egypt for over four hundred years, they were made foreigners by the rise in nationalism among the Egyptians. This would not be the entire fault of the Egyptians. Since the Israelites were encouraged not to intermarry with the Egyptians, the Israelites retained their racial identity while in Egypt. For this reason the Egyptians saw the Israelites as a foreign people within their nation, and thus a threat to their national security. ***Fight against us:*** When evil men seek to raise the people against someone or some people, they will invent slanderous accusations against their supposed enemies. They will develop hate against their supposed enemy by slanderous remarks. The Israelites were not a warlike people. They were shepherds. But the insecure Pharoah of Egypt saw a threat in the Israelites' numbers and strength. ***Taskmasters:*** These often cruel foremen supervised the work of the enslaved Israelites in order that they perform the work desired by the leadership of Egypt. Though Israel was oppressed, they as a people continued to grow strong. God's work is manifested better when one is under oppression. ***Treasure cities:*** These were cities for storing provisions. The Egyptians possibly remembered the days of the famine of Joseph's era, and thus built cities for the storage of grain. ***They were in fear:*** Because the Egyptians could not perceive the work of God among the Israelites, they were fearful of what they saw in Israel's growth. The circumstances of Egypt's cruelty of the Israelites would normally hinder the multiplying of the nation. But in the case of Israel, the more cruel the taskmasters were, the more Israel grew. Israel saw this as the work of God, but Egypt saw it as a threat to their national security.

1:15-22 Because the Egyptians could not stop the growth of Israel through cruel slavery, they resorted to genocide of the infants. ***Kill:*** By killing the males, the females could be amalgamated into the Egyptian society, resulting in the end of Israel as a race of people. By killing the males, they thought they would force the females to intermarry with Egyptian men. ***Hebrew women ... lively:*** They gave birth before the arrival of the midwives, and thus hid away their male babies before the arrival of the executioners. ***Midwives ... households:*** Because they feared God, the midwives were blessed with families themselves. Because they feared God, they possibly became a part of the greater Israelite nation. ***Every son ... cast into the river:*** Since the writer does not specifically mention the Hebrew sons, it is possible that by this time many of the Israelites had amalgamated into the Egyptian society. In order that the birth of male Israelites not continue, in his desperation, Pharaoh commanded that every male baby be drowned.

Chapter 2
BIRTH & EARLY LIFE OF MOSES

2:1-10 The purpose of the genocide of the Israelite babies was to suppress the growth of the Hebrew race. But for those who were perceptive to the prophecies that Israel would eventually come out of their captivity in order to receive the land promised to Abraham, they knew that the end of the captivity was near. They did not know, however, that it was at least forty years away when Moses would return from his stay at Sinai in order to deliver them from captivity. Neither did they know that they would be condemned for forty years of wandering in the wilderness before coming into the land of promise. ***House of Levi:*** Miriam was born into this priestly family (vs 4; Nm 26:59). Aaron, Moses' brother, was born about three years before Moses (6:20; Nm 26:59). ***A beautiful child:*** It was the faith of the parents that led to the preservation of Moses (Hb 11:23). ***See what would happen:*** Moses' mother was trusting in the providential care of God. She placed the basket where it would be discovered by the daughter of Pharaoh. She also placed Miriam in a place where she would also be discovered, and thus possibly asked where to find a nursing mother. Moses' survival, therefore, was the product of a mother's faith. ***Take this child and nurse it for me:*** In the household of a tyrannical leader as Pharaoh, there was one who had compassion. Little did Pharaoh know that within his own house he would be bringing up the child who would eventually lead the Israelites to freedom out of Egyptian bondage.

2:11-15 ***An Egyptian beating a Hebrew:*** At this age in his life, Moses knew the difference between Egyptians and Hebrews. Evidently his mother had taught him who he was and the moral principle that all men are created equal in the eyes of God. Because of the extent to which he went to deliver the Hebrew from the Egyptian, he had strong feelings concerning the equality of all men. ***Slew the Egyptian:*** Moses acted on his own, without sanction from either government or God. Because he thought his deed would be without the knowledge of others, he acted on his own to deliver the Hebrew. ***Who made you a prince:*** Because of the accusation against Moses by a fellow Hebrew, it is evident that the time was not right

for their deliverance. If his fellow Hebrews would not support him, then certainly the nation as a whole did not feel the need at this time for their own deliverance from Egypt. ***Moses fled:*** Because he felt insecure about who he was, he fled to Midian where he stayed for forty years (At 7:30).

2:16-25 The Midianites were relatives to the Hebrews for their existence came from Abraham through Keturah (Gn 25:1-4). Moses thus dwelt among a people who knew the one true God of heaven. The Midianites dwelt around Mt. Sinai. This mountain was also known as Horeb (3:1). ***Priest of Midian:*** God not only worked among the Israelites, but He also worked among all people, working through priests among the Gentiles (See Hb 1:1,2). The priest of Midian in this case was Reuel who was also known as Jethro (3:1; 4:18). ***Seven daughters:*** This priest was certainly not celibate as some would demand of this position. In this case, Moses defended the daughters of Jethro in order that their herds be watered. ***Egyptian:*** It is interesting that they first identified Moses as an Egyptian, indicating that their identification of him as such was either by his clothing or language, or both. ***Zipporah ... Gershom:*** Moses' kindness on this occasion led to a home, wife and children. ***Israel groaned:*** The bondage of Israel became more oppressive during the time Moses was in the Sinai. In order to keep the Hebrews in subjection, the Egyptians subjugated them to harsh labor. All this worked toward God's purpose of delivering Israel from bondage. Before Israel would be led to freedom by Moses, they first had to desire freedom. ***God remembered:*** He remembered the covenant He had with Abraham. The Hebrews would be brought forth because of His promise to Abraham. They would be brought forth from bondage when they realized that there was no permanent home in Egypt. Their future nationhood, therefore, depended on their understanding that they could never be a nation in the land of Egypt.

Chapter 3

3:1-6 Moses was forty years old when he fled Egypt (At 7:23). He was eighty years old when he stood before the Lord at the burning bush (At 7:30). He was thus eighty years old when he returned to stand before Pharaoh. ***Horeb:*** Some have suggested that this is a range of mountains wherein Mt. Sinai is a single mountain. It is known that these mountains are in the Sinai Peninsula, though it is not known which mountain is the actual mountain on which Moses stood. ***Angel of the Lord:*** Some have suggested that this was the preexistent Christ, though this is not indicated in the text, for the Christ would not be made known to man until approximately 1,400 years after these events. ***Holy ground:*** Where God would appear on earth in order to communicate with man would be a parcel of earth that would be set aside for a special purpose. It was holy ground for the purpose of God making this call of Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. The people were now ready for deliverance, and the man whom God had selected was ready to deliver them.

3:7-12 It is here that God started His providential plan to move Israel into the next stage of their history. The people as a race were developed in Egypt. It is now that He seeks to move the people into nationhood with their own land. He is doing this in order to preserve this segment of humanity (the nation of Israel) for the coming of the Christ in the centuries that would follow. ***A land flowing with milk and honey:*** It was a land whose inhabitants had now digressed to the point of no moral return (See Gn 15:16-21). It would be a land that would supply Israel for all its needs until the coming of the Messiah and Redeemer of the world. ***I will send you:*** In this case God chose to work through men, not angels, to accomplish His plans among men. ***Who am I:*** The inferiority complex of Moses is here revealed as he sees the tremendous task to which God is commissioning him. His life as a shepherd had humbled him, and thus he felt that the task of leading a nation to freedom was certainly an impossible assignment for a shepherd. But it is in our weaknesses that God is able to perform His greatness. And it is through the spirit of a shepherd that His might is revealed. ***I will be with you:*** Moses drew back from the mission because he focused on his own abilities. But this deliverance of Israel would not be the work of someone who exercised leadership skills. It would be the work of God. The fact that God used a shepherd to lead a nation demonstrated that He was working through the shepherd. ***This will be a token to you:*** Or, "a sign to you." When the nation of Israel would eventually be at the foot of Mt. Sinai, then Moses would truly understand that Israel's deliverance was the work of God. Our faith is strengthened when we finally realize that all that we have done is the work of God in our lives. When we finally understand that it is not about us, but about bringing glory to God, then our faith is increased in the power of God to work through us. The sooner one realizes this in his or her own life, the better he or she will work for God.

3:13-22 ***What is His name?*** Moses knew that he was returning to a culture where men had created many gods after their own imagination. Each of the Egyptian gods had a name, and thus Moses wanted a name by which to identify the God he was representing. The occasion here showed that Moses was not creating a god after his own imagination. He was reluctant to obey this God who called him to do this great task. When men would later read this account of what actually happened, they would conclude that Moses did not create this God in his own mind. On the contrary, it was the true God of heaven who took the initiative to create the vision of Israel's freedom in Moses' mind. ***I am that I am:*** The tense of the verb here is indefinite, which naturally would be the verb to express the God who is yesterday, today and tomorrow (See Rv 1:8). God here introduced Himself by His eternal nature. His eternality assumes His power. When discussing the concept of God, therefore, Bible students must understand the fact that because God is eternal, He is omnipotent (all-powerful). Since the statement, "I am that I am" is a translation from a form of the Hebrew word, *Yahweh*, and the fact that this word is used in Genesis 4:26 (also Gn 6:3), the name was known for centuries as the God of Israel. It is not that God needs a name by which to be identified. He existed before man, and thus before the imagined gods that men create after their own image, to whom they also assigned a name. The name here is given in order to describe who God is in His eternal existence and

power. ***Three days' journey:*** God knew that Pharaoh would resist this request. But the request would initially inform the Israelites that their deliverance from bondage in Egypt would not be easy for the Egyptians. Though God gave Pharaoh every opportunity to cooperate, He knew that the pride and arrogance of Pharaoh would stand against His request, and thus Israel would be given an opportunity to see the marvelous power of God over the magicians and their trickery to deceive the people. ***All My wonders:*** It was necessary that God manifest His power over all that man had to offer in reference to the tricks of men who presumed to control the spirit world. The manifestation of true miracles would be a testimony to Israel and all the world forever that there is no miraculous power manifested outside the work of God. The eternal nature of God assumes that supernatural power exists only with Him. ***Plunder the Egyptians:*** This would be Israel's payment for their slavery by the Egyptians. The plagues that would come would be so severe that the Egyptian people would give of their goods in order that the Hebrews leave their land. We must keep this in mind, for it is here that God would allow the Israelites to collect all the material that they would later use in the construction of the tabernacle.

Chapter 4

4:1-9 ***They will not believe me:*** Moses here again reveals his insecurity about his leadership. He knew that the Hebrews would have a difficult time believing that after forty years he represented the God in whom they believed. God understood his feelings. So in order to reassure Moses, as well as convince the Hebrews that he represented God, He gave Moses three signs. The three signs that are mentioned here signify the lessons that Israel would soon learn: ***Staff:*** The staff (rod) of the shepherd represented the leadership, care and protection of a shepherd. Under God's direction, Moses would be the leader by which He would manifest His care and protection for His people. ***Hand ... leprous:*** The lesson here is surely that God would care for their physical well-being. God would not only provide the leadership of a shepherd, He would also take care of His people with manna and quail. ***Blood:*** With great struggle they would be delivered. God would bring judgment and retribution on the nation of Egypt in order to give birth to the nation of Israel.

What is interesting about the evidence that Moses was to take back to Egypt were the signs that God gave him to prove that he was a messenger of God. Moses did not take to Egypt as evidence his personal encounter with God on Mt. Sinai. Since personal experiences are often the subjective conclusions of those who experience them, God does not allow personal experiences to be evidence for His existence. God uses true miracles as evidence for belief. These are clearly perceived miracles that are worked before the eyes of those He seeks to move to belief. The personal experiences of Moses were not the foundation upon which the unbelievers in Egypt were to be moved to belief.

4:10-17 ***Slow of speech:*** It seems that Moses was very hesitant about accepting his destiny. God had reassured him that the signs would convince the people. But now Moses in his excuses turns to himself by focusing on his own inadequacies. ***By ... whomever else:*** Moses here sought to excuse himself from the mission, as is so common among those who are asked to go forth to take the message of God to the world. But little did Moses know that he was the one chosen by God to change the world forever. Through such people God seeks to accomplish His mission of taking the gospel into all the world.

4:18-23 ***Return to my brethren:*** Moses did not at first reveal all that God had said and done on the mountain. But enough information was given to secure the approval of his father-in-law. ***Dead:*** God reassured Moses that Pharaoh and those who sought to kill him had since died in Egypt. Fear for his life from them would not be an obstacle to the accomplishment of his mission. ***Wife and sons:*** It is apparent that the sons of Zipporah and Moses accompanied Moses part way on his journey, as was a custom of the day. But when Moses knew that it was time for him to go alone, he sent his family back to Jethro. He knew he would see them again, but in the company of a nation of Hebrews. ***Wonders before Pharaoh:*** The miracles that God would work before Pharaoh would leave Pharaoh without excuse. The fact that God would have to go to the extreme of miraculous plagues revealed the extent to which Pharaoh hardened his heart against God. The miracles became the occasions for the hardened heart of Pharaoh to be revealed. In this way, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. ***Firstborn:*** If Pharaoh refused to allow God to have His firstborn (the nation of Israel), He would take the firstborn of Egypt. Thus Pharaoh's judgment not to give up Israel, God's firstborn, was Pharaoh's judgment against his own firstborn.

4:24-26 We are not given all the details concerning what is here in the background concerning the rite of circumcision and Moses' neglect to circumcise his second son. Though we understand that God is here teaching Moses that His commands must be strictly obeyed, there may have been some conflict between Zipporah and Moses in reference to the rite of circumcision. The firstborn of Moses had been circumcised. However, it is apparent that the second son was not circumcised. Either out of Moses' neglect, or possibly because Zipporah did not want him circumcised, the second son remained uncircumcised. That Moses was negligent in circumcising the second son is probably the case, and thus God used Zipporah to remind Moses that he must get his own house in order before he could go to the circumcised of God, the nation of Israel (See comments At 16:3).

4:27-31 ***Aaron:*** Not only did God appear to Moses, but He also appeared to the one who would be the first high priest of Israel. Aaron met Moses on the mountain where God had appeared to Moses, after which the two set out for Egypt. ***Signs:*** Once they arrived in Egypt, they first gathered the spiritual leaders (elders) of the people, and then met before the people and reassured them through the signs that God was with Moses. ***They ... worshiped:*** When one realizes the presence of God, he worships. The spontaneous worship on the part of the people here defines worship. It is not something one does in order to receive something, but something that is given to God by devout people in response to His awesome being. Self-centered entertainment meetings that are defined as worship

are vain and the product of a people who seek gratification for their own amusements. True worship is poured out from the hearts of those who bow before an awesome God.

Chapter 5
OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL

5:1-5 God had prepared the leadership, Moses and Aaron, for the deliverance of Israel. He had prepared the people to be delivered through suffering and the initial signs of Moses before the people. And now it was time to prepare Pharaoh for the birth of a nation. ***Let My people go:*** For all those who are in the bondage of sin and men, God's call is that His people be set free. Since the Hebrews had been in Egypt for over 400 years, it would have been natural for Pharaoh to believe that the people belonged to him. The Pharaohs were not put in power by the choice of the people, and thus they, as all dictators, assume that the people belong to them. ***I do not know the Lord:*** Though he knew all the gods of the Egyptians, he did not know the one true and living God. He was thus to be taught by the plagues that there is only one God. ***Sacrifice to the Lord:*** As all autocratic and self-centered leaders, Pharoah found it hard to believe that those over whom he ruled had a spiritual nature and the right to control their own destiny. To Pharaoh, the request to go sacrifice in the desert was only an attempt of his slaves to forsake their work for idleness.

5:6-9 ***More work:*** Pharaoh's first response to the request of Moses was an effort to break the will of the people. Little did he understand at this time the confrontation that he was working was against God, not man. ***Straw:*** Straw was used in making the sun-dried bricks. Unlike oven-baked bricks of today, straw was used to make the sun-dried bricks stronger. The Hebrews' work was increased when they had to gather their own straw, as well as maintain the same daily quota of bricks.

5:10-23 ***The officers:*** These were Hebrew foremen who were chosen by the Egyptians as taskmasters over their fellow Hebrews. If the quota of bricks was not met, they too were beaten. ***All the land of Egypt:*** In order to secure the straw that was needed for the making of the bricks, the laborers had to go throughout the land of Egypt. We must understand, therefore, that the time that takes place during the making of the bricks with their own supply of straw, is taking place over a period of several weeks. In our study of these events, we must understand that the events of the plagues took place over several months throughout all Egypt. ***Odious in the eyes of Pharaoh:*** The people did not understand the struggle they would have to go through in order to be delivered from bondage. Giving birth to a nation takes pain on the part of the nation itself. At this time, a sociological paradigm shift was about to happen in their lives. And when paradigm shifts happen in society, there is great social pain with the change. In changing from a society of bondage and slavery, to a paradigm of freedom, not only would their social governance structure change, but they as a culture of Hebrews would also change. For this reason, much social chaos would take place in the culture of Israel in the years to come after their deliverance. But this social chaos was necessary in order to transform the Israelite's "bondage mentality" to a culture of freedom. Knowing this helps us understand why God led Moses to forty years of preparation in desert living in the wilderness of Sinai before He sent him to deliver Israel. Moses would be the cultural bridge that would help Israel to transition from the bondage culture of Egypt to a culture of freedom. For forty years in the wilderness, the nation would go through this change. God's reason for the forty years of wandering in the wilderness of the desert, until those who were twenty years of age and over had died, was to filter out of the Israelite society those who would hang on to the past and refuse to change for the future. This tremendous social paradigm shift was now beginning to take place as God worked to bring the culture of Israel out of the bondage culture of Egypt. In such a drastic change, there is always social pain. But out of the pain comes forth a new nation. God did the same with the church of the first century. From the birth of the church in A.D. 30 to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, He transitioned the church out of the bondage of Jewish legalism over a period of forty years until He took the center of Jewish legalism, Jerusalem, out of the picture (See comments in intro. to Gl). ***Lord, why have You brought harm to this people:*** At this time Moses did not know the social struggle the Hebrews would have to go through in order that they be delivered from bondage. God could not explain to him what he had to learn for himself. He would have to live through the social chaos of a cultural paradigm shift in order to understand the struggles that come with the shift.

Israel's Deliverance From Bondage (6:1 – 18:28)

Outline: (1) God appears to Moses (6:1 – 7:7), (2) Plagues of Egypt (7:8 – 11:10), (3) Deliverance from bondage (12:1 – 18:27)

Chapter 6
GOD APPEARS TO MOSES

6:1-12 ***Let them go ... drive them out:*** The manifestation of the power of God would be so great through the plagues, that not only would Pharaoh let the Hebrews go, he would actually drive them out of the land of Egypt. ***God Almighty:*** The fact that He is the only God is evidence that He is omnipotent (almighty) (See Gn 4:26; 12:8; 17:1; 28:3). God is the only eternal and absolute power. ***Covenant:*** Since God knows that He can keep the conditions for the establishment of His covenants with man, He can bind Himself to a covenant. ***Land of their pilgrimage:*** The forefathers had been aliens in the land that Israel was to be given as a possession (Gn 15:18). God had not forgotten the promise of the covenant. He was waiting until Israel was prepared to enter the land, and for the wickedness of the inhabitants to digress to the point of no moral return. ***I will redeem you:*** One of our definitions for the metaphor "redemption," as it is used in reference to our salvation in Christ, is here defined. As Israel could not deliver herself from the bondage of Egyptian captivity, so no man can deliver himself from his own sin. It was by the grace of God that God chose Israel for nation building. It is by the grace of God that we are redeemed from sin through the blood of Jesus. ***Unskilled in speech:*** Literally, "uncircumcised lips." This was a Hebrew idiom referring to imperfection with refer-

ence to communication. An uncircumcised ear was one that would not hear (Jr 6:10). Uncircumcised lips referred to one who could not properly communicate. It is apparent that Moses lacked some skill in speaking. It is thus interesting that God would use such a person to accomplish the great feat of leading a nation out of bondage. It is true that in our weaknesses God's work can be witnessed. God uses those who feel weak and inadequate to accomplish His work in order that He be glorified.

6:13-27 God wanted Israel to know that in this historical deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, it was Moses and Aaron who were God's designated leaders. Their names are thus mentioned in this official genealogy. The genealogical list begins with Reuben and Simeon, the two older brothers of Levi. As the descendants of Levi, God chose Moses and Aaron from what would eventually be the priestly tribe of Levi to lead the people of Israel from bondage.

The emphasis here is on the tribe of Levi, from which Moses and Aaron came. There is thus more detail given concerning the descendants of Levi than in any previous genealogy (See Gn 46:9-11; Nm 3:18-33). By giving the ages of Levi, Kohath and Amram, God wanted Israel to know throughout history that by the time of the deliverance, there was no question in the oral lineage of Levi that Moses and Aaron were descendants of Levi. ***Amram:*** The Amram of verse 18 is not the same Amram of verse 20 because there are several generations between the two. ***Korah:*** Though Korah, Moses' cousin, later perished because of rebellion, his mention here is to affirm to his descendants their genealogical heritage (Nm 16:1; 26:11). ***Jochebed:*** She was the mother of Moses and the aunt of Amram. ***Eleazer:*** This was Aaron's son whose grandson was Phinehas. ***Elisheba:*** This is the name of Aaron's wife which is in Greek, Elizabeth. ***Their armies:*** Reference is to the orderly arrangement by which Israel was marched out of Egypt, not to armed men for battle. ***These are the ones:*** God inspired this statement to be made in order to reaffirm to Israel for all history those to whom He spoke and by whom He worked to bring Israel out of bondage.

6:28-30 ***Unskilled in speech:*** At this time God again commissioned Moses to go before Pharaoh. But Moses again questioned his ability to speak. So on this encounter with Pharaoh, Aaron was used to fulfill his destiny from God to be the spokesman for Moses. From this point on, the two leaders worked as one, though Moses was the one Pharaoh would perceive to be a "god" before Pharaoh.

Chapter 7

7:1-7 ***A god to Pharaoh:*** It would be Pharaoh who would perceive Moses to be such because Pharaoh considered himself a god to the Egyptian people. He would conclude that Moses was a god because of the miraculous power that would be unleashed on Egypt through the command of Moses. Though Pharaoh would reject the commands of Moses that came from God, he could not reject the work of God through the miraculous plagues. It is for this reason we must understand that the confrontation that was about to begin between God and Pharaoh was a confrontation between the one true and living God and the gods of Egypt that had been created after the imagination of the Egyptians. The miracles that God would work through Moses were for the purpose of proving to the Egyptians that there was no other God than the one the Hebrews worshiped. We must not misunderstand this point simply because it has been the work of God throughout history to disprove the false imaginations of men who seek to create their own gods and establish their own religious behavior. Religions that progress to the point of instituting the head of the religion to be the political or government head of state, have put the people of the nation in bondage. However, the Israelites were under political bondage. The Egyptians were under the bondage of their own ignorance. By the end of the confrontation between God and Pharaoh, both the Egyptian people and Pharaoh would understand that there is only one God. We thank the Holy Spirit for inspiring a record of this historical event in order that we have an inspired document of the behavior of people and princes that are deceived by their own imaginations. ***I will harden Pharaoh's heart:*** The miraculous work of God through Moses would be the opportunity for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. We must not understand this to mean that God worked directly on the heart of Pharaoh to harden his heart. Because of his pride and arrogance, Pharaoh had a heart that was disposed unto hardening itself against the will of God to free Israel. Therefore, when the opportunity presented itself for hardening—the deliverance of Israel by God—Pharaoh hardened his own heart against the will of God. For this reason, God here assumes the responsibility for the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh because He demanded of Pharaoh that he let His people go (See comments Rm 9:14-24). ***The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord:*** We must not forget this statement as we study through the following events. During the performance of great magical tricks that were claimed to be miraculous, the Egyptians would judge that God's miraculous work through the plagues was truly supernatural work. They understood that their magicians worked only tricks that counterfeited the supernatural. We must not assume that the magicians who stood against Moses and Aaron worked any supernatural events. Only through their skillful trickery were they able to presume to be in control of the supernatural. It is here that the Egyptians would be our witness, that this confrontation between Moses and the magicians was not a contest between the supernatural powers of God and some supposed supernatural power of Satan. The contest was between the deceptive power of Satan against the mighty supernatural power of God. After the contest, the Egyptians clearly saw this, and thus, we must also clearly understand this from this record of the events. Though we do not have all the details of the events themselves, we must conclude that Satan worked no miraculous power throughout these events. The witness of the Egyptian populace is a testimony to this conclusion (Compare comments 2 Th 2:10-12).

PLAGUES OF EGYPT

7:8-13 ***Show a miracle:*** When this would be asked, it would be asked from those who had experienced no true miraculous work of God. Pharaoh would be asking only for the amusing tricks of his sorcerers. His surprise would be in the

fact that the supernatural work of God would be unleashed on the nation of Egypt. The purpose of the miracles of God would be to prove that Moses and Aaron were messengers from God. If the magicians of Egypt actually worked miracles, then there would be no proof in the confirming miracles that Moses and Aaron were God's true messengers. It is for this reason that God does not allow Satan to work miracles through any of his messengers. ***Their secret arts:*** The fact that the Holy Spirit used this terminology identifies that what the sorcerers did was actually the skillful art of human manipulation in performing that which was perceived to be miraculous. These skills are called "arts," or enchantments, because they were the work of men, not the work of any supernatural power. They were "secret" because these magicians would not reveal their skills, since the revelation of such would displace them from their positions in society. Therefore, though we are not given all the details of what happened, we must not assume that they actually unleashed some supernatural power of the underworld. The magicians were simply skillful men in their secret arts of illusion. ***Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs:*** The onlooking sorcerers walked away from the event without their staffs, thus affirming that a true supernatural work had taken place by the hand of Aaron. The text says that the sorcerers' staffs "became serpents." But the text also states that Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs, not serpents. We would understand that the sorcerers' staffs had only become what appeared to be serpents by those who were standing by. It could have been that God allowed the sorcerers' staffs to become true serpents in order to present the occasion for further hardening of the hearts of the Egyptians. If this were the case, then the swallowing up of the staffs of the sorcerers would result in God's messengers prevailing over all that would be presented by the sorcerers of Egypt. Keep in mind that the text actually states that it was the staffs that were swallowed up, not real serpents. In cases as this we must always keep in mind that not all that happened in the event was recorded in the Bible.

7:14-25 ***The plague of blood:*** This is the first plague that was issued against Pharaoh and all Egypt because of Pharaoh's resistance to the will of God to let Israel go free. ***To the water:*** It could be that in the mornings Pharaoh went to the bank of the river for worship. Since the Nile River was an object of worship, this plague was God's first strike against the idolatry of Egypt in order to manifest His power over the gods that the Egyptians had created after their own imagination. ***Lord God of the Hebrews:*** The Lord wanted Pharaoh not to misunderstand the One from whom the command came to turn the water into blood. ***Nile:*** The existence of the nation of Egypt depended on this river. It seasonally flooded its banks, watering the rich farming land of Egypt. God's strike against this river was a strike against the very livelihood of Egypt. The plague was so intense that all the fish died and the Egyptians had to dig for water in shallow wells. ***Magicians ... did so with their enchantments:*** We are not told where the magicians obtained water for this magical trick since all the waters of the Nile had been turned to blood. But the fact that the inspired Scripture refers to them as magicians is evidence that they worked only a trick in order to turn water to blood. And since they could have had only a small amount of water, we would conclude that the trickery would have been easy to do in the eyes of the people. ***His heart was not moved:*** It seems incredible that this miracle did not weaken the resistance of Pharaoh. God knew that this Pharaoh of Egypt would have a hardened heart, and thus used the occasion of Pharaoh's hardened heart to inflict the plagues upon Egypt. The work of God through the plagues would thus be a testimony to Israel that God was real and that He had the power to work such wonders with His creation. He revealed that He had power over His creation, and thus power that could not be copied by anything that man could do.

Chapter 8

8:1-15 ***The plague of the frogs: Let My people go:*** The command from God was issued again to Pharaoh in order that he know for sure that God wanted him to understand that freedom for Israel must be clearly understood. ***If you refuse ... I will smite:*** A fair warning is given. If refused, then another miraculous outpouring of God would come forth on the land of Egypt. ***Frogs:*** By striking the Nile, the course of life in Egypt was attacked. By bringing even into the bedrooms of the houses of the people the masses of loathsome frogs, the living conditions of the Egyptians were attacked. The dilemma for the Egyptians was that the frogs were objects of worship, and since these creatures invaded their houses, they could not carry on with their daily living without crushing many frogs. ***Magicians:*** We wonder why these sorcerers produced more frogs, when a real miracle would have involved taking away the frogs. ***Take away the frogs:*** For the first time Pharaoh is weakened. He lied to Moses and Aaron in order to secure relief from the devastating effect of the frogs on the people. He never intended to let the people go. ***Tomorrow:*** Not only was it a miracle that the frogs appeared, but now it would be another miracle that they would die in one day. ***Hardened his heart:*** When the pressure was on, Pharaoh was weakened. But now that the frogs were gone, he went back on his word and refused to allow Israel to leave.

8:16-19 ***The plague of the lice:*** This plague is unleashed without any formal presentation before Pharaoh. ***Dust ... lice:*** As man was created from the dust of the earth, so were these lice. Some have suggested that the lice were gnats or mosquitoes. The agony of the plague was in the fact that there was no escape from these insects. The purpose of the plagues was to make life miserable for the Egyptian people. Since Egypt was not a democracy, the people could not remove Pharaoh. However, since the people considered Pharaoh a god of the land, the people would wonder why their god could not bring them relief from the plagues. ***The magicians tried:*** Unlike the other pronouncements of the plagues, there was no formal presentation before Pharaoh, which presentation was carried out over a period of time. The magicians in the former plagues, therefore, could prepare their own tricks in order to counterfeit the plagues. But in this case, they could not do so. ***This is the finger of God:*** The magicians had to confess that they had come to the limits of their ability to copy a truly miraculous event. This may have been an excuse for their in-

ability to counterfeit a true miracle, or an admission that they had no time to prepare for the counterfeit work.

8:20-32 ***The plague of the flies:*** The location of this presentation before Pharaoh is also at the river where Pharaoh went for early worship (vs 20). ***Flies:*** It is difficult from the Hebrew word used here to determine the exact insect that is meant. Some translations have translated the Hebrew word to mean gnats, beetles or gadflies. ***The land was wasted:*** Regardless of the correct translation of the Hebrew word, the effect of the insects on the land was devastating. ***Land of Goshen:*** Though the other plagues reached into the land of the Israelites, this plague was an indication that God had separated His people from the affliction of the plagues. The Egyptians could not misunderstand the point God was making. The point was that Israel was God's people, and He wanted Pharaoh to let them go. ***Go ... sacrifice:*** Possibly Pharaoh knew that the Egyptian people would stone the Israelites if they sacrificed the animals that were sacred. For this reason, Moses offered no compromise with the evil intent of Pharaoh, and thus demanded the three days' journey away from the Egyptians in order to offer the sacrifices.

Chapter 9

9:1-7 ***The plague of death among livestock: Severe pestilence:*** It is not known what this disease was. The effect of it was the death of the livestock of the Egyptians. The livestock of the Hebrews was spared. Since the livestock of the Hebrews was spared, God again signaled to Pharaoh His protection of His people. ***All the livestock:*** The word "all" often means in Hebrew a great number, but not totality. In the seventh plague (20,21), the livestock was further afflicted.

9:8-12 ***The plague of boils:*** As with the third plague, Pharaoh received no warning concerning this plague. As the dust of the ashes spread throughout Egypt, it caused boils. ***Magicians:*** These imposters are mentioned in the context of this plague, but only for the purpose of informing us that their magic could not guard Egypt against the power of God to inflict mankind with the plague. ***The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh:*** This is the first time it is stated specifically that the Lord assumed responsibility for hardening the heart of Pharaoh, which hardening was mentioned in 7:3. The Lord takes credit for hardening the heart of Pharaoh because He presented the opportunity for the arrogant predisposition of Pharaoh to resist the will of God to let His people go.

9:13-35 ***The plague of hail and fire:*** It seems that Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh at any time they chose. It is this plague that intensifies the hardships of those who were afflicted. The affliction would come within the household of Pharaoh in order that he understand that there was no god that man could conceive as the God of heaven. ***Grievous hail ... fire:*** The intensity of this plague was introduced with severe judgment language in reference to its effect on both people and livestock. This was the first plague that took human life. It was more destructive to human property and was made known with the terrifying manifestation of hail mingled with fire. ***I have raised you up***: God brought Pharaoh into the position he had at the time of the Exodus. He foreknew that Pharaoh would resist His plan to deliver Israel from captivity. He knew that all ten plagues would have to be unleashed on Egypt in order that He be glorified as the all-powerful God of heaven. ***Declared throughout all the earth:*** God could have wiped Egypt off the map, and then taken the Hebrews into freedom. He did not do this in order to manifest to the world His control of all that is in the world. We read the narrative of these events as a result of Pharaoh's hardened heart, and thus God has accomplished His purpose through Pharaoh. ***He who feared the word of the Lord:*** It certainly took some time to get the message of the curse of this plague announced throughout Egypt. It was thus a message of urgency for the sparing of life. Those Egyptians who by this time were convinced that God was working, gave heed to the message. Since the judgment would be upon all life in the country, the message had to be delivered to everyone in order to give people the opportunity to protect themselves from the impending danger of the hail. ***Broke every tree:*** The size of the hailstones was large enough to break down trees and kill large animals. But in the safety of Goshen, Israel was once again spared the devastating effect of the plague. ***I have sinned:*** Pharaoh was certainly terrified by the results of this plague. But Moses was surely suspicious of this confession since evil men will often confess and repent in times of trial, but forget their confessions and repentance when things return to normal. Confession and repentance are not necessarily signs of a changed life. When fruits of repentance come forth, then there is evidence of a changed life.

Chapter 10

10:1-20 ***The plague of the locust:*** In the introduction to this plague God gave two reasons why He had chosen one as the hardened Pharaoh. (1) He chose Pharaoh in order that He might show the signs of the plagues to him. If Pharaoh had given in at the beginning of the plagues, then we would not have this record of the great miraculous work of God through all the plagues. (2) God wanted Israel and all mankind to have a record of this great work of God. The fact that Pharaoh hardened his heart made it possible for God to work, and for us to have this revelation of the great work of God. ***Locusts:*** This would be a plague of what is commonly referred to as grasshoppers. They would spread across the land and eat all that was left from the other plagues. ***Pharaoh's servants:*** It is apparent that Pharaoh had become what dictators commonly become in reference to their people. They live in the cocoon of their palaces and are not informed concerning the real condition of the people over whom they rule. It is the servants, therefore, who knew the devastated situation of Egypt. They are the ones who pled with Pharaoh. ***Go serve the Lord:*** It is at this time that Pharaoh finally relents to the initial request of Moses and Aaron, that the Israelites journey three days into the desert in order to sacrifice to the Lord. However, Pharaoh wanted Moses to leave their families and flocks in Egypt, a supposedly guarantee that the men would return. But no compromises to the initial request would be tolerated. ***East wind:*** Plagues of locusts are not uncommon in the world. But the miracle of the plague here was that it happened at the very time Moses said it would happen. The second miracle of the

plague was that the locusts did not go into the land of Goshen. Since the locusts destroyed everything, this put the Egyptians at the mercy of the Hebrews in the land of Goshen. The food source of the Egyptians had been destroyed, and thus they had to buy food from the Hebrews. In this way the Hebrews plundered the Egyptians as God has previously stated. ***Face of the whole land:*** Some translations read "whole earth." But the meaning is that they covered the whole ground of the Egyptians, for they did not go into the land of Goshen.

10:21-29 The plague of darkness: ***Darkness that may be felt:*** The Creator of light shut off light. It is not difficult to understand that the Creator who brought light into existence is here dispelling the rays of light that came from the sun, moon and stars. The lack of light was so great, that they could not see one another, and thus for three days there was no movement of humanity. ***Only let your flocks and your herds be detained:*** And such is the nature of the one who has bowed his knees with a hardened heart. He grudgingly submits, but only with compromises in reference to what must be obeyed. But in reference to obedience to God, there can be no compromise in our obedience to His will. God seeks total commitment to His will. ***Never see your face again:*** This was the last time Moses would ever meet with Pharaoh. From this time on, Pharaoh, after the next plague, would thrust the Hebrews from his presence, only to have his army parish in the waters of the Red Sea.

Chapter 11

11:1-3 Verses 1-3 are parenthetical with specific instructions to the Hebrews concerning things that they must do in preparation for their flight from Egypt (See 3:21,22). ***Ask from his neighbor:*** This would complete the plunder of Egypt. As a conquering army despoiled those who were conquered, so Israel prevailed over Egypt, and thus plundered them as the Egyptian people willingly gave what was requested. It could be assumed that the Egyptian people, unlike Pharaoh, had finally relinquished to the demands of Moses. They willingly gave of their possession in order to expedite the flight of the Hebrews from the land of Egypt. Or, they could have spent all their possessions to buy food from the Hebrews. Since the plagues had taken place over several weeks of time, if not months, the spirit of the Egyptian people was broken. They saw that their only relief from the severity of the plagues was to rid the land of every Hebrew. Since the Hebrews would not need the precious metals that they took from the Egyptians for their own personal use, then there was some other reason for God exhorting them to plunder Egypt. We do not discover this reason until Israel arrives at the foot of Mt. Sinai where God instructs Moses to construct the tabernacle. The precious metals that were taken from Egypt were used in the construction of the tabernacle.

11:4-10 ***The plague of the death among the firstborn:*** The statements that are made here come from God and are directed to Moses, for the conversation with Pharaoh concluded in 10:29. God now acts without appeals to Pharaoh, or conversations with Moses. ***Firstborn:*** Reference here is to the male children, the pride of the Egyptians. In the culture of the Egyptians, the firstborn son was the hereditary center of reference to the financial and social prestige of the family. All other children of the family looked to the firstborn as the future leadership of the family. God's striking down of this member of the family, therefore, would and did bring Egypt to its knees. ***Pharaoh will not hearken to you:*** It is the nature of dictators, especially those who feel that they are gods over the destiny of their people, to defy any outside force that would endanger their position. Dictators have no feelings for their people. They will sacrifice the well-being of the people for the sake of their position. They do this because they are out of touch with the people. Their narcissistic infatuation with themselves and who they are is greater than their care for the people.

Chapter 12
DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE

The significance of what is explained and what happens with reference to the Passover cannot be overemphasized. And eternal metaphor is here being established for the Passover sacrifice of the Son of God in the centuries to come after this historical event. The Passover event would be for the safety of the firstborn of the Hebrew children. The firstborn of the Egyptians would be sacrificed for the deliverance of the Hebrews. The consequence of the event would be the freedom of Israel from bondage. These historical events would set the earthly and literal significance of the sacrifice that the firstborn of God would make for the deliverance of man from sin at the time of the cross.

12:1-13 ***First month of the year:*** This would be the new beginning of the religious month for the Israelites. It would be the month Abib (13:4). After the deliverance, the month became known as Nisan. ***A lamb:*** A lamb for each paternal family was to be offered. ***Him and his neighbor next to his house:*** If the lamb was more than sufficient for his family, he was to invite his next door neighbors into his house for the eating of the lamb. These instructions set the stage for the household eating of the Passover that would last throughout the history of Israel. The Passover would be a communal feast. ***Without blemish:*** The lamb was to be chosen four days before the event, thus securing its protection that it be without blemish. The fact that it was to be no more than a year old implied its innocence. ***Upper door posts:*** The sacrificial lamb was to be killed between sunset and dark, with the blood being placed on the lentil of the doors of the houses in which it was eaten. ***Eat the meat in that night:*** Once roasted, the meat was to be eaten in the night the lamb was killed. ***Unleavened bread:*** This was bread dough that was not mixed with leaven. It was bread that was made without fermented dough. ***Burn with fire:*** There were to be no leftovers. The morning after the eating of the lamb, the remainder was to be burned. ***Loins girded:*** While they were eating, their long robes had to be tied up to their loins in order to be prepared for flight. Their shoes had to be on when eating in order to signify haste. ***Judgment against all the gods of Egypt:*** Societies that give up a knowledge of God will create for themselves their own religious behavior and gods to appease this behavior. Systems of religion throughout the world may not be as complex as that developed in Egypt where there was a god for every aspect of man, Pharaoh himself also claiming

to be a god. But systems of religious thinking develop in the same manner in every culture as it developed in Egypt. It was a pharaohian religion with a political/religious leader at the top, with subservient leaders to maintain the system (the magicians), and the adherents who allowed the system to continue (the Egyptian people). In this system, dictatorial leaders take advantage of the religious nature of man, and thus use religion to maintain their control over the people. In many cultures this control is maintained through accepted religious leaders who in some way are supposed to have control over the spirits of the underworld. But in every case, such religions are only the invention of the imagination of men who have forsaken a knowledge of the true and living God. It is against these imaginations that God sets Himself to destroy. In the plagues of Egypt, we have thus an inspired conquest of God over the religious imaginations of men. It is in the context of this confrontation that we now understand the nature of God's judgment on Egypt and all who would seek to create religion after their own imagination. The "gods of Egypt" were not real, but only gods the Egyptians had created after the imagination of their own minds. God's confrontation with these imagined gods, therefore, was a confrontation with the erroneous thinking of Egyptian religionist. It was His confrontation with the thinking of men who created religion and gods after their own desires. In the religious/social context of Egypt, God wanted to bring down the religious arrogance of the Egyptians. By doing such, He proved that He is the only one true and living God. ***I will pass over you:*** From this action the definition of the word "Passover" is established. The sign of the blood on the lintel of the doors was the signal that God would pass over the house of those who had obeyed the command to sacrifice the lamb.

12:14-19 ***This day:*** This was the fourteenth of Abib, the new beginning of the religious year of Israel. ***An ordinance forever:*** Some translations say a "perpetual ordinance." Here we now have a definition of the word "forever" as it is used in many contexts of Scripture. The ordinance was to be observed throughout the generations of Israel. These generations ended in Christ, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gl 3:28). Therefore, the ordinance of the Passover was to last "forever" until the generations of Israel ended, which they did in Christ. The use of the word "forever" is in the context that the ordinance not go away until God intended that it go away. The emphasis is on the surety of the existence of the ordinance, not on its supposed unending existence. ***Unleavened bread:*** The Passover was followed immediately by the feast of unleavened bread. The feast of the unleavened bread started the day after the eating of the Passover meal. ***Holy assembly:*** Since the Passover was established for an immediate family to eat with friends close by to consume the Passover lamb, this was a home assembly. It was not a gathering of a great number of people. These two days, the Passover day and the seventh day, were holy in the sense that they were separated from the rest of the days on which the Israelites could work. ***Brought your armies:*** These days were to be days during which they must remember how God brought the host (armies) of the clans or families of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. ***Cut off from the assembly:*** The leaven was even to be put out of the houses on these days. Those who failed to partake of these feasts would give up their right to be a part of the nation of Israel. All Israelites, and all foreigners who joined themselves to Israel, were to observe these feasts. ***Leaven:*** The fermentation of the leaven was a symbol of evil and wickedness. At this time in the history of Israel, it was the influence of Egyptian idolatry. This influence was to be separated from the thinking of the Hebrews in order that they be set apart (sanctified). Today, the church is to do the same. The church is set apart from the world through the sanctifying blood of Jesus (See 1 Co 5:7,8).

12:20-28 In preparation for the coming of the destroyer, the blood was to be splashed on the lintel and the two doorposts. The occupants were then to stay in the house until the morning. The presence of the blood signalled that the destroyer would pass over the house (Compare 1 Pt 1:18,19).

12:29,30 ***All the firstborn:*** Except for those who had the blood of the lamb on the lintels and doorposts of their houses, every firstborn of both man and animal died at midnight. The judgment was without prejudice, and thus indicates that God will bring His judgments upon all who will disobey His will.

12:31-36 At this time, Pharaoh, before whom Moses said he would not speak again in 10:29, sent an urgent messenger to Moses. ***Be gone:*** Pharaoh had at this time understood the point and request of God. His statement is a command that the Israelites leave the country. ***Bless me also:*** Pharaoh wanted to escape any other judgment that might come. In his humiliation before the Egyptian people, he at this time seems broken in spirit. ***The Egyptians urged the people:*** All the Egyptians now want the Israelites gone lest they suffer more. Their fear was that the entire population might suffer death if the Israelites remained in the land. So with haste the Hebrews took up those belongings they could carry and headed for freedom. They impoverished the Egyptians by asking for their gold, silver and clothes. ***Asked:*** Some translations have used the word "borrowed" to translate the Hebrew word *sha'el*. But the better definition of the word is either "asked" or "demanded." All that they took of the Egyptians would be used later in the construction of the tabernacle.

12:37-39 ***Succoth:*** The location of this city is unknown. It was probably a short distance from Rameses toward the Red Sea. ***600,000:*** Since this number included only those men who were of the age to go to war, with the wives and children, the total number of those who went in the exodus was probably somewhere around three million people. ***Mixed multitude:*** When some Egyptians realized that there was only one God of all, this statement possibly included some of these believing Egyptians who joined the exodus. This number could have also included other foreign slaves who decided to join the exodus to freedom. Unfortunately, some of these people eventually became a snare to the Israelites (Nm 11:4). ***Flocks ... herds ... livestock:*** Though the Israelites certainly possessed some livestock for their own survival in bondage, the Egyptians may have also given them livestock for their journey. ***Unleavened cakes:*** The fact that they had no time to prepare food for travel indicates that their departure would be with great haste after Pharaoh gave the order that they "be gone."

12:40-42 ***Four hundred and thirty:*** It is not stated in this context if this number included any time for the dwelling of the fathers in the land of Canaan previous to the dwelling in Egypt. In Galatians 3:17, Paul stated that the law was given 430 years after Abraham. But in Acts 7:6 it is recorded that Stephen stated Israel was in bondage in Egypt for 400 years. The number of 400 years agrees with Genesis 15:13 where it is stated that Israel would spend this many years in affliction. ***Solemn observance:*** It was a night that would never be forgotten throughout the lifetime of those who left Egypt. It was independence day, and throughout the generations of Israel this event was to be commemorated as a day of solemn remembrance.

12:43-51 These laws are added instructions concerning the observance of the Passover. The observance centered around fellowship and celebration. It was a meal of unity among all Israelites and a celebration of their deliverance from bondage. ***No foreigner:*** The Passover was for the circumcised Israelites. ***Bondservant:*** A slave could eat the Passover only when he had been circumcised. ***In one house***: The lamb was to be eaten in one house and not distributed among houses. ***Bone:*** They were to break no bones of the lamb. ***All the assembly:*** Though it was a house assembly for the actual eating, it was to be eaten throughout cities and regions in the homes of various people. Since neighbors could be invited into the one house, everyone was to meet in house assemblies in order to eat the Passover lamb. ***Foreigner sojourns:*** Even if one were passing through the land, all the males had to be circumcised before they could eat the Passover with the Israelites. ***Home-born and .. foreigner:*** The same law concerning the Passover is to be applied to everyone who would eat of the lamb.

Chapter 13

13:1-2 ***The firstborn ... is Mine:*** In His plague against the firstborn of the Egyptians, God now claimed the firstborn for Himself. With the blessing of sparing the firstborn of Israel came also the responsibility of dedicating the firstborn of Israel to the Lord. The firstborn children of Israel were to be set aside for God's special ownership. Since the Hebrew word here for firstborn is masculine in gender, then reference would be to the firstborn males.

13:3-10 ***Remember this day:*** This was Israel's independence day (See 12:14-20). ***Sign ... memorial:*** It was a sign that they remember the supernatural power by which God delivered them from captivity. It was by no invention of themselves or strength of their armies. Their deliverance was solely by the grace and power of God. They were to remember this event every year. The metaphorical meaning is certainly pointing Israel to the time when God would again redeem them, but the redemption would be from the bondage of sin, from which no man can deliver himself.

13:11-16 Not only were the firstborn males of the people to be given to the Lord, but also the firstborn of the animals. They were to be given in sacrifice to the Lord. ***I redeem:*** From this use of the word "redeem" we would understand that God takes the firstborn unto Himself from the rest of the children. ***Phylacteries:*** A phylactery was a small box that was worn between the eyes on the forehead. In it were the scriptures of this text (vss 1-16). These scriptures were to be remembered concerning Israel's deliverance. Other scriptures were also written and placed in the phylacteries (See Dt 6:4-9; 11:13-21).

13:17-22 ***Around the way of the wilderness:*** If Israel had headed directly to Palestine, it would have taken them about two weeks to cover the distance. However, they were slaves right out of bondage, and thus untrained as warriors for immediate battle to take the land from the Canaanites. If they had gone directly to Palestine, they would surely have encountered the warlike Philistines, and subsequently suffered great loss of life, or would have returned to Egypt. For this reason, God took them south to Mt. Sinai, and then into forty years of wandering in the desert because of their lack of faith. Israel had to go to Sinai to receive the law, for without law there can be no true freedom. ***Armed for battle:*** Though the word "armed" (literally, "harnessed") is often used in reference to military action, in this context it refers to the organization of the approximate three million people who made their way out of Egypt. ***Joseph:*** See Gn 50:25. Since Joseph had been entombed after the manner of Egyptian mummies for four hundred years before this event, his body was taken for burial in Canaan (Ja 24:32). ***Etham:*** The exact location of this area is unknown, and thus the exact location of the crossing of the Red Sea is unknown. However, many Bible scholars presume that the crossing took place somewhere in the southern part of the Red Sea. ***Pillar of the cloud ... fire:*** These two leading phenomena stayed with Israel for many years as they wandered to Mt. Sinai and throughout the wilderness. They were led away from areas of great danger, but to the areas where God wanted them to go. The cloud and fire were constant reminders that God was with them.

Chapter 14

14:1-4 God's direction for Israel's journey here is to present an opportunity for the destruction of Pharaoh's army. For this reason He asked them to turn back to the north and move to the shore of the Red Sea. In this position Pharaoh would perceive that they were cornered, and thus would feel confident to launch an attack against them. ***Entangled in the land:*** After Pharaoh had finished mourning the loss of the firstborn of Egypt, he possibly thought that the God of Israel had lost His children in the deserts of Egypt west of the Red Sea. He may have perceived that their turning back and camping by the shore of the Red Sea was because of confusion on the part of the Israelites.

14:5-9 ***Hardened:*** Bitterness had now set in. Pharaoh had lost something which he treasured for the greatness of Egypt. In his humiliation at the hand of those he considered his slaves, he made the decision to assemble as many chariots as possible in order to bring down retribution on the Hebrew slaves. It is still apparent at this point that he did not realize that he was planning an attack against the God of heaven.

14:10-14 ***They said to Moses:*** When the times are tough, the true character of an individual is manifested. Such is also the case with a nation. In their weak faith, this nation com-

plained to its leader for delivering them to a point of what seemed to be certain death. The nation did not understand at this time that God had led them to an opportunity where they had to trust totally in Him. In order to strengthen our faith, God leads us to the point where we have to trust in Him. Though the Israelites had some faith, the faith they needed to build a nation in freedom had to be strengthened before they reached Mt. Sinai where the law would be given. We thus see the trap in which they found themselves at this time as a faith building opportunity for the nation.

14:15-18 ***Go forward:*** It was not a time to look back. It was not a time for crying out in complaint to God. It was a time for action. The dividing of the water not only meant that Israel was given salvation from death, its closing meant that the oppressors of Egypt would be removed as a threat forever. In the magnitude of the event, God would receive the glory.

14:19,20 *Angel of God:* The "angel of the Lord" (See 3:2) that was giving them direction by going before them, was now giving them protection by standing behind them. The cloud brought darkness to the Egyptians, but light to the Hebrews.

14:21-25 ***The waters were divided:*** Since the Israelites were on the west side of the Red Sea, the strong east wind that dried up the bottom of the parted sea would be blowing in their faces as they walked across on dry ground. ***Wall:*** The waters were a wall on each side of the Israelites as they walked through on dry land. We do not know how wide the way was made, nor how high the wall of water was. But we do know that enough space was made for approximately three million people to pass through in a single night. ***The Egyptians pursued:*** We would assume that the Egyptians were so obsessed with destroying the freed slaves that they rushed into the opening of water without thinking. It could also have been that Pharaoh issued a life-threatening command and his men obeyed. ***He troubled the army of the Egyptians:*** Certainly the nature of the environment in which they had led themselves would be enough to stir great apprehension in their hearts. In order to slow down their pursuit of the Israelites, in the midst of the Sea, God caused the chariot wheels to fall off. The Egyptians were thus bogged down. They were too far into the Sea to return to dry land when God released the wall of water upon them.

14:26-31 The water that saved the Israelites, was the same water that destroyed their enemies. ***Egyptians dead on the sea shore:*** It takes several days for a drowned body to surface. Add some time for the bodies to wash ashore, and we understand that in their exhaustion the Israelites remained at the scene on the east shore for several days while they enjoyed God's victory. It would have been a surreal experience that needed time to comprehend fully. ***Feared ... believed:*** The awesome event that caused fear, also produced belief. They had witnessed the judgment of God on the ungodly, but experienced the salvation of the Lord as they watched the dead bodies of the Egyptians wash ashore.

Chapter 15

When one experiences the great salvation of God, he is moved to sing praise to God, which thing the saved will always do when they are delivered from their oppressors (See Rv 15:3). It is only natural for people to sing when they feel a spirit of thanksgiving for all that God has done to deliver them from sin.

15:1-12 God is the savior of His people. He threw the horse and Egyptian rider into the sea. He delivered His people in order that they sing praise to Him. ***The Lord is a warrior:*** This anthropomorphism describes the Lord in human terms as one who goes to war for the salvation of the people. ***Your right hand:*** This is again another anthropomorphism, the description of God by use of human terms. Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and thus does not have a body form as a man, the figurative meaning is that by the power of the right arm He was able to deliver. Though the enemies of God and His people are defiant, as expressed in verse 9, God can overcome anything that man may pose as a threat against His people. At this time in history, there was nothing that man could do to harm the nation of Israel. The only threat that would come to Israel would be a threat from within, which threat would happen later at the foot of Mt. Sinai when they would seek to return to Egypt. ***You among the gods:*** It is not that there are other gods. These were gods that were created after the image of men who gave up a knowledge of the one true and living God. The point is that there is no imagination of man that is greater than the God of heaven, for men cannot conceive of that which is beyond their experience. In these events, therefore, the imagination of the Israelites was stretched to the limit as they physically experienced only a small indication of the God who created all things.

15:13-19 ***People You have redeemed:*** The literal meaning of what would be the metaphor of the Christian's salvation is here defined. As God physically redeemed the Hebrews from a bondage from which they could not deliver themselves, so through the blood of Jesus Christians have been redeemed from sin. ***Your holy habitation:*** This statement in verse 13 is a reference to the habitation of God. Because He is spirit, He resides in a heavenly environment. Contrary to what some have asserted, this is not a reference to Jerusalem and the temple, which did not exist at the time this was written. ***People will hear and be afraid:*** The news of this deliverance would spread for years throughout the land of Palestine which Israel would take over forty years from this time. ***Reign forever and ever:*** Certainly the reign of God is without end, but the meaning here is not on time but certainty. The context defines the meaning. As God certainly overthrew the Egyptians, He would certainly overthrow all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan at the time when He would bring Israel into the borders of the promised land.

15:20,21 ***Miriam the prophetess:*** As Aaron her brother, Miriam led as a prophetess among the Israelites. Aaron was established as the spiritual leader and Miriam as the prophetess, but it was their brother Moses who was the commander in chief. ***Timbrels ... dances:*** In their joy for their deliverance, these women broke forth with tambourines and dances for their deliverance from the Egyptians and for their new freedom from the taskmasters of their former existence.

15:22-27 ***Wilderness of Shur:*** The Israelites were three

days into the waterless wilderness where there were few trees and vegetation. They could not drink of the waters of Marah (that is, "bitter"). ***Murmured:*** They had just experienced the parting of the Red Sea, but the lack of water tested their faith. As usual, people of little faith always complain to their leaders instead of turning to God for deliverance. Their sin was in complaining to God through Moses. But their complaining was not only a lack of faith on this occasion, it was a culture of complaint that they had developed throughout their years of bondage in Egypt. While in bondage, they developed a culture of complaining against their taskmasters. This culture had to be broken before they could truly trust in God, as well as keep His commandments without grumbling. This would be a hard lesson for them to learn, but one they must. *"Do all things without grumbling and disputing"* (Ph 2:14; see Jd 16). One who continually grumbles has not yet learned the spirit of submission. ***Tree ... into the waters:*** The act of throwing the tree into the waters to produce the miracle was to reaffirm the leadership of Moses, who was the channel through whom God worked. ***Tested them:*** This reveals why God allowed them to go the three days into the wilderness, and then run out of water. He wanted the Israelites to discover their own lack of faith. ***Statute ... ordinance:*** If they would continue to obey His voice, God promised that He would take care of them. Beginning with the crossing of the Red Sea, and continuing with the miracle at Marah, God was seeking to build the faith of the Israelites. Their complaining must be replaced with faith. ***Twelve wells:*** As they came to the waters of Elim, the Israelites surely remembered their complaints at Marah. If they would have only endured past Marah, they would have made it to Elim.

Chapter 16

16:1-3 On their way to Mt. Sinai, the Israelites left the wilderness of Shur and entered the wilderness of Sin. It is in the wilderness of Sin that they again sinned by complaining. Instead of going to God in prayer for provision, they complained to their leaders, Moses and Aaron. The euphoria of their freedom had now left them as they yearned to return to Egypt where they ate well in bondage. Their faith in God to provide for them was not yet strong enough to take them through tough times. Because of their reaction to the desperate situation in which they found themselves, we now understand why God led them into these circumstances. He needed to prove to the nation that He would take care of them if they would only put their entire trust in Him.

16:4-12 We must conclude that God was allowing Israel to come to the point of deprivation in order that they trust in Him for guidance and sustenance. Throughout the beginning of the birth of this new nation, the people had to learn to trust in God. As with the beginning of every group of God's people, great faith was needed. As a nation, they were very insecure. They had no land, no gardens, and no wells for water. They walked in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. It was the perfect environment in which to develop faith. As with great men whom God would use to lead great movements, God first takes His people to the desert in order that their focus be placed entirely upon Him. In the future, they would look back and conclude that their existence as a nation was totally the work of God who formed them into a nation in the Sinai Peninsula. ***See the glory of God:*** When the food came, they would perceive the presence and work of God. Every true miracle manifested the glory of God, not the man through whom the miracle was worked. The true miracle was so profound that the beholder could not ignore the one through whom God worked the miracle. ***Not against us, but against the Lord:*** Anyone who would claim to be of the people of God must understand that any complaint they have in reference to their well-being is not against their leaders, but against God. In this context Moses chided the people for their misguided complaints. ***Glory of the Lord appeared:*** Aaron brought the people near to the cloud, from which the Lord clearly manifested His presence. The clearly manifested presence of God is a manifestation of His glory. The giving of the manna and quail was a rebuke from God to Israel because the appearance of the manna and quail was a clear manifestation of God. ***You will know:*** The meat and bread was a clear evidence that God was with them, as well as His provision for their physical needs. In this early beginning of the nation of Israel, God was patient with their complaints while providing for them. But the time would come when their complaints would be rewarded with punishment (See Nm 14:11,12).

16:13-21 ***Quail:*** By this time in their journey, the quail provided the meat that the Israelites craved. The miracle was in the continual creation of the manna and quail in that the Lord provided the food throughout their journey of forty years in the wilderness. ***Manna:*** The word "manna" probably came from the question that was asked by the people when they saw it, "What is it?" We do not know what it was, but it was something as a fine flake-like substance that lay on the ground in the early morning (Compare Jn 6:32-40). As the quail, the miracle of the manna was that it was provided daily for Israel throughout their forty years in the wilderness.

16:22-31 There was a continual miracle for Israel in the manna. Not only would it appear six days out of the week, there would be enough on the sixth day to be gathered for the Sabbath. However, if they gathered for two days' provision on any other day than the sixth day, the manna bred worms and stank. What they needed for the Sabbath was to be baked or boiled and held over for the Sabbath. ***Sabbath:*** Before the giving of the Sabbath laws on Mt. Sinai, Israel as a nation was here being prepared to honor the Sabbath (See 20:8-11; Gn 2:2,3). It is apparent that though the Sabbath may have been kept by the patriarchs, it was not observed by Israel in captivity. In the events that took place in this context, God was preparing Israel for the giving of the Sabbath law at Mt. Sinai. ***Every man in his place:*** Throughout the history of Israel, even to the time of Jesus, this principle was kept by the Jews. The Sabbath was not a time for general assemblies of the people. Every family was to remain at home. By the time of Jesus, the Pharisees had instituted a great number of laws in order that this principle be kept, one being the Sabbath-day journey (At 1:12).

16:32-36 The purpose for keeping an omer of the manna for generations to come was to prove that it actually existed. The miracle was so great concerning the provision of the

manna and quail that later generations would surely consider such to be a fable of the fathers, and thus forget that God had actually provided for them in the wilderness. ***Omer ... ephah:*** These were measurements in Egypt, though the ephah continued to be used by the Israelites. One ephah was about a bushel in modern terms and an omar about one and a half quarts, or approximately a liter.

Chapter 17

17:1-7 ***Rephidim:*** It is believed that this may be the Wadi Refayid that is in a valley in the southern mountains of Sinai. The name means "rests" or "resting places." ***Quarreled with Moses:*** It seems that their complaining had here become more intense since they were desperate for water. At this point, turning back to Egypt was no option. They needed water to live, and Moses was desperate to answer their complaint. ***Tempt the Lord:*** Though they desperately needed water, they had forgotten all the provision of the Lord in the past. It was at this point in their journey, therefore, that God's patience with them turned from enduring their complaints to punishment for their lack of faith. Moses recognized this, and thus questioned why they would tempt the Lord who would bring punishment upon them. ***Smite the rock:*** With the elders as witnesses, God miraculously brought forth water in the midst of a desert. ***Massah:*** The word means "contention." Here the Israelites contended with the Lord, wondering if He was with them. ***Meribah:*** This word means "proof," that is, God proved that He was with His people. The metaphor of this event is carried over to Christ offering the spiritual drink that men need today (See Jn 7:37; 1 Co 10:4; Gl 3:1).

17:8-13 ***Amalek ... fought with Israel:*** With his armies, Amalek attacked the feeble and weak who were in the rear of the Israelite company (See Dt 25:18). Though the Amalekites were descendants of Esau (Gn 36:12,16), they had forsaken their fear of the God of Israel, and thus had felt no guilt about attacking the people of God. ***Joshua:*** First known as Oshea (Nm 13:16), this is the first mention of Joshua. His name means, "Jehovah is salvation." ***Top of the hill:*** Hur, the grandfather of Bezaleel who was later inspired to build the tabernacle (31:2), went with Moses and Aaron to a hill that overlooked the valley where the battle between Israel and the Amalekites took place. ***Moses held up his hand:*** In this incident, God was reaffirming the position of Moses, as well as His protection of Israel through Moses. In order to prevent anarchy in the years to come, God wanted Moses to be considered the authority through whom He worked to bring Israel to the land of promise. With the presence of Aaron and Hur, Moses was able to accomplish His part in the victory, illustrating that Moses also needed the help of others to stand by him. Good leaders know that they must always work in the company of others on whom they can lean.

17:14-16 ***Write this:*** This would be the beginning of the record of the history of Israel after their deliverance from bondage. ***Memorial:*** The events were to be recorded for future generations to remember. The memory of the event would certainly play a part in reminding the people what Amalek had done to the weak and feeble of Israel at a time when they were most vulnerable. In the future, the Amalekites would be completely annihilated from history for this attack against Israel (See 1 Sm 15; 1 Ch 4:41-43). ***The Lord is my banner:*** This is from the word "*Jehovah-nissi*." The altar would be a monument that the judgment of God was now upon the Amalekites, which judgment would eventually take place about one thousand years later during the days of Hezekiah. We must not be deceived when God takes time to carry out his judgments (See comments 2 Pt 3). Because He delays judgment does not mean that He will fail to bring judgment.

Chapter 18

18:1-5 ***Zipporah:*** Zipporah had returned to the house of Jethro when Moses had initially left for Egypt (4:18-26). ***Two sons:*** These sons, Gershom and Eliezer, had been born to Moses while he lived with Jethro during the forty years he was in Sinai before going to Egypt (2:22; 4:25). ***The mountain of God:*** This was the Mt. Sinai (Horeb) where God first appeared to Moses (See 3:1; 17:6; 19:1).

18:6-12 ***Bowed down:*** There was a good relationship between Moses and his father-in-law. Though Moses had just brought a great nation of people out of Egypt to the land of Jethro, he was humble enough to bow down and show respect to his father-in-law. ***Goodness that the Lord had done to Israel:*** All glory was given to God for all that had transpired during Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. Moses took no glory for himself. ***Jethro rejoiced:*** Though the Midianites were later portrayed as the enemies of God (Nm 31), Jethro, a priest of Midian, stood as a beacon of righteousness in an evil nation. Righteous people are often found in the midst of wicked neighbors and nations (See Gn 14:18-20; 20:6; Jb 1:1,8). As a priest of God in Midian, Jethro understood about the one true God of heaven. He thus gave glory to God for what He had done to deliver Israel. ***Now I know:*** The events that surrounded the deliverance of Israel evidently proved to Jethro that there was no other God than the one true and living God of Israel. ***Greater than all gods:*** Jethro saw in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt that the true God of heaven was greater than the imagined gods of men. ***Sacrifices:*** The sacrifice was in the giving of his own animals to be eaten in a celebration for what God had done with the nation of Israel. Burnt offerings were totally consumed for God. The other sacrifices, however, were consumed in a feast to the glory of God by those who were in fellowship with God and one another. In this way, Jethro manifested his unity with the nation of Israel.

18:13-23 ***Moses sat to judge:*** How the judging was to be carried out was not something that was inspired by God, and thus Moses used his own method of judging. His reason for judging as he did was that the people come to him to "inquire of God" in order that he might teach them "the statutes of God and His laws." ***You will surely wear away:*** Jethro saw Moses' system of judging as very inefficient, and thus counseled Moses that he could not physically keep up with such a system. It would be difficult for him and for the people to function with the method of judging that he was doing. After reassuring Moses that God had chosen him to lead His people, he advised him to select men with three qualifications in or-

der to do the day-to-day work of making judgments for the people. (1) ***Able men who fear God:*** Those who would do the work Moses was doing must be godly men who respected the will of God. (2) ***Men of truth:*** These men would speak that which is right and according to the will of God. (3) ***Who hate covetousness:*** Since their work would lend themselves to be given money for their counsel, the men who would work in counseling must not be those who would use their position for the sake of money. Jethro's qualifications for those who would do the work Moses had been doing, guarded the people from the covetousness of men. Since the people sought counsel from God, they should not be subjected to men who do not know the will of God or men who seek to minister the will of God for money, or have their judgments swayed by bribes. ***Officials of thousands ... hundreds ... fifties ... tens:*** Each official would be responsible to the one above him, and thus the final authority would reach to Moses who would still be God's appointed authority through whom the law of God would come. Jethro's system would allow the people to go to a higher court if they were not satisfied with the judgment of those officials over the smaller number of people. ***If ... God so commands:*** In order that such a plan be initiated, Jethro placed the final decision before Moses, who would seek God's final approval.

18:24-27 ***Moses ... did all that he had said:*** Though not recorded, we assume that Moses sought God's approval, and then the plan was put into action. This concept of judging civil matters in Israel was later written as part of the law (Dt 1:9-18). After Jethro had given his advice, and the organization of judgment was put into place, he then returned to his own land. The wife of Moses, Zipporah, and his two sons, remained with Moses as the nation of Israelites moved on to Mt. Sinai.

Organization Of The Israelite Nation (19:1 – 40:38)

Outline: (1) Giving of the ten commandments (19:1 – 20:26), (2) Giving of civil laws (21:1 – 23:33), (3) Giving of ceremonial laws (24:1 – 31:18), (4) Sin of the golden calf (32:1-35), (5) Second set of stone tablets (33:1 - 34:35), (6) Construction of the tabernacle (35:1 – 39:43), (7) Dedication of the tabernacle (40:1-38).

Chapter 19
GIVING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

19:1-6 It took three months for Israel to make the journey from the crossing of the Red Sea to when they reached the foot of Mt. Sinai. Some have assumed that they reached their destination on the day of Pentecost, but the meaning of the Hebrew phrase "same day" is too generic for this interpretation. Upon their arrival, Moses' first act was to go up the cloud-covered mountain for instructions from God. When he went up the mountain, the first instructions that God wanted him to communicate to Israel was to remind them that He had carried them out of Egypt on "eagles' wings." ***Covenant:*** It was at this time that God was bringing the nation into a covenant relationship with him. ***Above all people:*** It was not that they were a better people. We must keep in mind the reason why God was establishing a covenant with this nation of people, while at the same time driving out the nations who possessed the land of Canaan. God was seeking to preserve a segment of mankind for the coming of the Savior of the world, Jesus. Since society always digresses toward moral degradation as in the time before the flood of Noah (Gn 6:5), so God through Israel was seeking to maintain a holy nation for the delivery into the world of the Redeemer for the sins of mankind. ***A kingdom of priests and a holy nation:*** It is significant to remember this phrase, for in the New Testament it is stated that the church is a holy and royal priesthood (1 Pt 2:5,9). This statement is made of Israel before an inner priesthood was established through the sons of Levi. The lesson is that the entire nation was a priesthood that was set apart (holy) from the nations of the world. So is the church. The function of the priest was to minister, and thus every member of the church is a ministering priest. The purpose for this is that God wants His people busy in doing good as believers in order to keep themselves separated from the ways of the world. It is not that God forgot the rest of the world when He separated Israel as a nation of priests. As a nation of priests they were to set the example for all other nations to follow. They were to minister the word of God to other nations, for it was delivered to them on this occasion. Unfortunately, throughout their history the nation of Israel neglected their priesthood duties to other nations by conforming to the nations around them. As a result, the nation eventually ceased being God's representative before the nations of the world.

19:7-9 ***We will do:*** The condition for Israel to remain in a covenant relationship with God was that they keep His commandments. The people thus made the vow at a time when everything was going well, but eventually they would forsake all that the Lord had commanded (Hs 4:6). ***Thick cloud:*** This was God's reaffirming before the people that Moses was God's designated mediator between them and Him. What Israel heard from the cloud was a sound that they recognized was from God (20:1; Dt 4:11,12). They did not actually hear the audible words that Moses heard.

19:10-15 ***Sanctify them:*** These events began the process of separating the nation from their past. Every person was to wash. All clothes were to be washed. And for two full days there was to be no sexual intercourse among the people. During this process, the people were to be fenced away from the mountain. If either man or beast touched the mountain, he was to be put to death. The purpose for keeping the people away was to guarantee that in their emotional euphoria in reference to the surreal event, they not be tempted to climb the mountain where Moses would be in the days while he was conversing with God. This was not the time in history that people could come boldly unto the presence of God (See Hb 4:16). ***They will come up to the mountain:*** When the signal was given, Moses, with the priests and elders, could come up the mountain, but only Moses was to approach unto God (24:1,2).

19:16-25 ***Thunders and lightnings:*** The purpose for the events that took place at this time was that God was making a psychological change in the minds of the people (See Hb 12:21). They needed to be changed by the impression of this traumatic event because of the journey that they had be-

fore them. God knew that they would reject His will to take the land immediately. He would subsequently sentence them to forty years in the wilderness. What they experienced here would take them through the years of wandering, and then into the first generation of sons and daughters who would possess the promised land. ***Warn the people:*** In all the proceedings that were taking place, God knew that some would, in their zeal, possibly violate His command that they not come near the mountain. Some might presumptuously think that they had a right to ascend the mountain. But God demands that His will be obeyed, and that will was that only Moses and Aaron ascend the mountain.

Chapter 20

In our study from this point on in the giving of laws to Israel, we must keep in mind that the laws are given for the social well-being and health of the nation of Israel. The foundation upon which the laws were given was to make it possible for people to cohabit as a society. For this reason, the Bible student must always seek for the reason behind the giving of any particular law. God has the best interest of His people at heart as He seeks to direct them to live as good citizens in the new nation they will be in the land of Canaan.

20:1,2 ***God spoke:*** God communicated to Moses through the language of men, but to the people the "voice" was an awesome sound that struck reverential fear in their hearts (see vs 18; 19:16; Dt 5:22).

20:3 ***No other gods:*** It was not that other gods existed. The gods about which He spoke here are the imaginations of men who create gods after their own image. The point is that God is above the thoughts of man who would seek to rebel against God, and then create religious behavior after their own lusts. Once one creates a religious behavior after his own lust, he then creates in his mind a god who approves of his behavior. ***Before Me:*** Though Israel would not give up her knowledge of the one true and living God, she would eventually bring into her theology beliefs in the gods of the nations around her. God knew that the Israelites would do this, and thus, He here lays the foundation that He will not have any conceived gods in the minds of men that would control the behavior of His people.

20:4-6 ***Graven image:*** Once one creates a concept of a god in his mind, he makes for himself a physical likeness of this imagination in order to remind him of his creation. This is the spirit of idolatry. It is a spirit that is within men, for all men must have some god to control their behavior. Without a knowledge of the word of God, men create gods after their own behavior. For this reason, therefore, Israel was to make no images of conceived gods to whom they would give obeisance. Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), the people of God need no physical object of worship or image that would remind them of their God. ***Not bow down yourself to them:*** It is not wrong to sculpture things that have religious significance, for such works were a part of the tabernacle (25:31-34) and the temple (1 Kg 6:18,29). Idolatry is making such things with the feeling that they have emotional power over those who make them. No physical object should be venerated as holy, and thus have some influence over the behavior and actions of people. It is not that a rock, or tree, or stick would have any power. The "power" is in the fact that one thinks such objects have supernatural power. It is idolatry to think that any physical thing of this world has supernatural power over people.

20:7 ***Name of ... God in vain:*** This would be calling upon the name of God for useless superstitious beliefs and practices of magic, or calling upon the dead in order to determine the destiny of things in this world. This would include the making of flippant oaths and promises in the name of God. The use of God's name in profanity would be a violation of this commandment. Those who are godly will revere the name of God and use it in speech that is reverent and holy.

20:8-11 A commandment had to be made to rest on the seventh day because of man's desire to consume himself with work for the purpose of gain. The principle is that six days a week are sufficient to accomplish in labor that which is necessary for living. The Sabbath, therefore, is made for man to rest (Mk 2:23-28). ***Six days the Lord made heaven and earth:*** This one statement forever discards any theologies or scientific speculation that the earth and its inhabitants came into existence by some system of evolution over millions of years. It is not a question here as to whether these were six 24-hour days, since the context clearly explains that they are. Those who would believe the Bible, therefore, must believe that God created the heaven and earth in the six 24-hour days that are explained in Genesis 1. He could have created the heaven and earth in a shorter or greater time. But to establish an example for man in reference to his work, God set a pattern for work by the six 24-hour days of creation.

20:12 ***Honor your father and your mother:*** Respect for parents is the foundation upon which society is built. From the family comes individuals who are prepared for society. When this purpose is forsaken, society digresses into chaos (See comments Ep 6:1-3). ***Long in the land:*** If Israel would maintain the strength of their families, they as a nation would remain in the land of promise. Their removal from the land, which came many years after the giving of this commandment, was evidence that they failed to maintain the sanctity of the family. Whenever the family of any society breaks down, then the society breaks down.

20:13 The sanctity of life must be guarded in order to maintain social well being. If there is no regard for human life, then a society has digressed into social chaos. This commandment does not refer to capital punishment that was later given as a discipline for society to rid itself of those who give up their right to cohabit with society. Other commands are given later for deaths that took place as a result of one person taking the life of another (See 21:13; 22:2; Nm 35:23). Jesus' quotation of this commandment from the Greek Septuagint is a commentary on what is here meant. *"You will not murder"* (Mt 19:18).

20:14 Sexual activity that violates the sanctity of the family is a manifestation of the breakdown of society. All illicit sexual activity outside the bond of marriage is a sign that family relationships have broken down, and thus relationships between individuals have digressed to the lust of the flesh (Compare Mt 5:28). Sexual immorality is always a sign that men place the lust of the flesh above their love of God.

20:15 Since this commandment assumes that one has the right to have personal property, any other person who obtains property through fraud or theft violates this commandment. Even if society as a whole would sanction fraud in one's work as an employee, or his duty to pay taxes to the government under which he lives, it is a violation of the principle of this commandment. Stealing things from an employer or stealing from any person, are all under the condemnation of this commandment. Any act whereby one would take that which belongs to another person or institution is stealing. When one steals, he is selfish and inconsiderate of his fellow man. The thief can have no true relationship with other people.

20:16 Slander, gossip, unproven accusations, false witnessing and half truths all fall under the judgment of this commandment. No man has a right to endanger the good name of another through falsehoods that come from his mouth. The one who bears false witness against another is selfish, thinking only evil of the one against whom he has borne a false report.

20:17 As with the previous four commandments, this commandment also strikes at the heart of the individual. The covetous person is self-centered. His covetous heart will eventually lead him to do evil in reference to his neighbor. Since individuals in a society live in an economic relationship with one another, the integrity by which people deal with one another in business and labor is violated by the covetous person.

20:18-21 The response of the people to what had just transpired was only natural. In fear, they backed away from the mountain. ***The people stood afar off ... Moses drew near:*** We could conclude that the nature of the event struck terror in the hearts of the people. However, by faith Moses drew near. God wanted the people to fear, for fear generates reverence and obedience to the will of God. At this time in their history, Israel needed to understand that the God of heaven was not like the gods of Egypt from which they had just come. The God of heaven was real and present, whereas the gods of Egypt were only the result of the imagination of men. And since they were the result of the imagination of men, they could be controlled by the thoughts of mere man, specifically by the priests of Egypt.

20:22-26 Because of what had just transpired, the people asked Moses to mediate between them and God (vs 19). ***You will not make other gods:*** They were not to imagine other powers (gods) that would condone their misguided religious behavior. Since God created man with a great imagination, He knew that their imagination would run wild if they gave up a knowledge of God (See comments Rm 1:18-32). If they made an idol, the idol would be the evidence that they had given up their knowledge of the true and living God. The idol would be a witness against them, showing that they had rebelled against God. ***Stone:*** Their altars were to be made of uncut stone lest they be tempted to cut an image in the stone to a false god. ***Steps:*** In order to guard against the priest exposing his nakedness under his robe, there were to be no steps leading up to an altar (28:42).

Chapter 21
GIVING OF CIVIL LAWS

21:1-6 It was not that slavery existed at this time in Israel. The giving of the laws in reference to slaves is in view of the slavery they came out of in Egypt. God knew what would develop when they came into the land of Canaan. He knew that when one became so indebted to another that he would have to give himself to the service of another until his debt was paid. ***A Hebrew servant:*** One who was poverty stricken could sell himself to a fellow Hebrew in order to pay off his debt. However, after six years of service, he would be relieved of his obligation (See Lv 25:44-46). If he had a wife when he came into slavery, he could take her with him when he was set free. But if he married a fellow slave and had children, he could not take either her or the children if he chose to be set free. ***Pierce his ear:*** If one wanted to remain a slave forever in the house of his master, then his ear was to be pierced, symbolizing that he would listen to another for instructions for the rest of his life.

21:7-11 The probable reason for the following law concerning female bondservants was to better the life of a father's daughter by marrying her into an economically advantaged family. The regulations prevented a wealthier family from taking advantage of a poorer family. The female slaves, therefore, were socially protected more than the male slaves. At the end of six years, she also could go free (See Dt 15:12-17). In this case, if a father sold his daughter to become a wife to his master or his master's son, and the husband was not pleased with her, she could be redeemed (bought back) by the father. However, her husband could not sell her to a foreigner. If she was given to his son as a wife, then she was to be counted as one of his daughters. If she became a second wife, all her rights as a wife were to be continued. If the husband failed to provide any of his duties toward her, she was free without charge.

21:12-17 The murderer who violated the sixth commandment was to be put to death under God's law. Since the society of Israel was not to be a society of prisons, those who gave up their right to life by willingly taking the life of another, were to be taken out of society. ***Lie in wait:*** God made a distinction between the accidental killing and intentional murder of another person. ***Place:*** These would later be identified as the refuge cities (Nm 35:22-28). It was to these cities the manslayer was to flee until the time when he could be properly tried. If found guilty of intentional killing of another, he was to die. ***Altar:*** Some believed that they could flee to an altar for refuge. But if convicted, the guilty person was to be taken from the altar and executed. ***Strikes ... father ... mother:*** The parents were God's authority over children, and thus, if a child who was at an age where he was judged accountable for his or her own actions, and this accountable child struck a parent, that child was to be executed. ***Curse:*** This would be invoking God to act against His representative on earth, the parent.

21:18,19 If a dispute between two people ended in one striking another with either a fist or stone, with no intent to kill, and the victim did not die, but could rise and walk, then

the penalty was that the one who made the striking blow had to pay for loss of time for the victim and medically care for him until he had completely recovered.

21:20,21 These laws were given in view of the fact that some Israelites had to give themselves to the slavery of another because of debt that could not be repaid. In the civil laws of Israel's society, there were strict laws in reference to the care of slaves. If a master struck a slave, and after a day or two the slave recovered, then the master would suffer no penalty. But if the slave died, the master was to suffer all economic loss.

21:22,23 If a pregnant wife intervened in a fight between her husband and another person, and the wife lost the unborn infant, then the one who hurt the wife was to pay a fine that was determined by the judges. If the death of the infant was accidental, then the offender would not suffer the death penalty. But if it was intentional, then he was subject to the death penalty.

21:24-27 The retaliation law that was given to Israel was more lenient than the law that existed previous to the giving of the law to Israel. In reference to this law, Jesus stated that love should prevail over the desire to retaliate against one's neighbor (Mt 5:38-48). In reference to slaves, if a tooth or eye was harmed by a master, the slave was to be set free.

21:28-32 It would be criminal negligence on the part of an owner of an ox if he knew the animal was dangerous, but did nothing to protect others from such an animal. Therefore, a victim's family was to be compensated for the person who was killed by a dangerous ox. The owner would have to pay the compensation in order to escape the death penalty.

21:33-36 With the policy of open range in Israel, open pits and wells had to be protected. If they were not, and a neighbor's animal fell in the pit, then the one who owned the pit was responsible. If one ox killed another, and the ox that killed was not known for being a dangerous animal, then the two owners would share the selling price of the surviving ox.

Chapter 22

22:1-4 If a thief was caught and slain in the act of his theft, no blame was to be made against the owner of what the thief was trying to steal. But if the owner waited until the day light to slay the thief, then he was guilty of the death of the thief.

22:5,6 Though there was open range grazing allowed, there was still the right to own private fields and property. No man's livestock was allowed to graze on another's private property.

22:7-13 One man could entrust his possessions or livestock into the hand of a neighbor. These protective laws were to direct the proper handling of a man's possessions if they were entrusted to another for safe keeping. If one were entrusted with the possessions of another person, then he was to protect the possessions as if they were his own.

22:14,15 This law emphasized the ethical principle that if one borrowed another's possession, then he was fully responsible for the safe keeping of the possession. If the possession was lost or damaged without the presence of the owner, then the borrower was responsible for restoring what was lost. ***If it is hired:*** Since the cost of the hired possession would include the replacement of the item, the one who hired the possession did not have to repay the cost if it was damaged or lost.

22:16,17 Since a father expected that the marriage of his daughter would bring him a dowry, the seduction of a daughter was considered theft. The laws in reference to seduction were thus in reference to violating the commandments against stealing, not adultery.

22:18-20 ***A witch:*** This was a person who sought to captivate the minds of others through the practice of magical tricks (sorcery). In such a practice the witch was distracting the thinking of people away from God and His will. Since it was the practice of witches to distract the minds of the people away from God, they were not allowed to exist in Israel. ***Lies with an animal:*** Sexual intercourse with an animal was wickedness that could not be tolerated in Israel. Such perversion was the practice of many of the pagan religions of the Cannanites whom God judged through the proxy of Israel. ***Any god:*** See Dt 13:1-16.

22:21-24 Stranger: Israel was to remember that she was an alien in the land of Egypt, and thus was not to oppress any stranger (foreigner) who was in the land or who was passing through the land. ***Widow ... fatherless:*** In His tender compassion toward the widows and orphans, God warned that no one should add to the affliction of these people (See Js 1:27). Unfortunately, throughout their history, they eventually forgot this commandment. As a result, their women and children became widows and orphans as God judged Israel through invading armies.

22:25-27 ***Lend money:*** Reference here could possibly be to one taking an advance on his salary in order to buy food. If a coat were taken as a pledge, it was to be returned before sundown, before the coolness of the night set in.

22:28-31 All citizens were to respect their leaders. Once a ruler of the people had been selected, he was to be held in honor by the people. ***First ... fruits ... firstborn:*** The first cuttings of the harvest belonged to God, as well as the firstborn of the families and animals (13:12). Of the livestock, the firstborn was to stay with the mother in order that the mother be reassured. On the eighth day the animal was to be given to the Lord for a sacrifice. ***Torn by beasts:*** Many of the laws that were given in reference to food, were given for health reasons. In this case, the animal that was torn, or the animal that killed the torn beast, could have been diseased. Therefore, they were not to eat of either animal.

Chapter 23

23:1-9 As most of the laws that were given to Israel, these laws all deal with one's relationship with his neighbor. These are minor civil ordinances that would direct one's behavior toward his neighbor after the manner of loving one's neighbor as himself. ***Bribe:*** That which corrupts justice most is the act of persuading the judge's favor through a gift (See 1 Sm 8:3; Is 1:23; 5:23). When a society has resorted to bribes in its justice system, it has become a corrupt society in which there is no real integrity. Justice is always twisted when a bribe is involved.

23:10-13 ***Seventh year:*** It was beneficial for the land not to be worked for a year every seven years. Not only was this command for the benefit of the poor, it was a benefit to the

land. The command assumes that the farmer will store up enough on the sixth year to carry him over to the seventh, thus teaching a "saving culture" in Israel. However, it also assumes that the farmer would stagger his "seventh year" planting with different fields. While one field was "resting" during the seventh year, other fields would be producing while not in their seventh year. When a field was in its seventh year, the poor were allowed to use the land.

23:14-19 The Israelite males were to appear before the Lord at three special feasts. The feast of the unleavened bread, which was associated with the Passover (12:14; Lv 23:5), was kept at the beginning of the harvest and commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The feast of harvest, or Pentecost (Lv 23:15-22; Nm 28:26-31; Dt 16:9-12), was kept at the conclusion of the harvest and commemorated Israel's passage through the Red Sea. The feast of the ingathering, which was also called the feast of tabernacles (Lv 23:34-43; Nm 29:12-40; Dt 16:13,14), was observed in the autumn when all crops had been gathered in for storage. This feast was in thanksgiving for God's mercy in their wandering through the wilderness.

23:20-22 ***Angel:*** This was the messenger of God, which at this time was manifested in the pillar of the cloud and fire. The Angel was to be obeyed, for His presence in Israel was the authority of God among His people.

23:23-33 ***Their gods:*** These were the gods that had been created after the misguided thinking of the people who dwelt in the land. Men have civil laws that control society in order to prevent anarchy. However, men who are ignorant of the one true and living God will seek to bring men under the control of imagined spirits or ghosts. Since it is the religious nature of men to submit to their religious inclinations, Israel was here warned not to bring their minds into the captivity of the imagined spirits (gods) of the people of the Canaanites. Those who would believe in such gods have brought themselves into the captivity of the imagination of men, and thus their beliefs become a snare to their behavior. ***Boundary:*** Israel's western borders would be from the Mediterranean Sea south to the Red Sea. On the east, they would be from the Euphrates River in the north to the desert in the Negev. It was only during the days of Solomon that Israel eventually possessed all the territory within these borders (See 1 Kg 4:21-24; 2 Ch 9:26).

Chapter 24
GIVING OF CEREMONIAL LAWS

24:1-8 Moses had already been on the mountain (19:3). He received the book of the covenant that was to be sealed. ***Elders:*** Moses was now to return to the presence of God on the mountain, taking with him the heads of the families of Israel. Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders were to worship at a distance, with only Moses approaching near unto God. The people were to stay away from the mountain (19:12,13). ***Book of the covenant:*** These would be the words of 20:22 to 23:33. ***Burnt offerings:*** These offerings were given in reference to sin, while the peace offerings were given in recognition of God's mercy. ***Blood:*** This was the first covenant that God made with Israel. It was consecrated with the blood (life) of animals. A new and second covenant would later come in their history that would be consecrated by the blood of Jesus (See Hb 8:6 - 9:28).

24:9-11 In the party that went to meet with God, Moses represented the God-ordained leader of the people. Aaron, Nadab and Abihu represented the religious leadership. The seventy elders were the civil leaders, or nobles who were highly respected by the people. ***They saw the God of Israel:*** This is a theophany, and thus, we must not assume that God has the physical appearance of a man, for God is spirit (Jn 4:24; see Ex 33:20-23). On this occasion, God revealed Himself in a manner that was discernible by the human eye. This appearance was possibly a vision. ***Ate and drank***: This is one event that explains that many of the sacrificial offerings were eaten in fellowship with one another in the presence of God. This sacrifice was offered to God, but was to be eaten by those who made the sacrifice. Though we do not understand all that went on during this event, the nobles were able to eat and drink in the presence of God, and yet, not be in fear. This is surely a picture of eternal heaven when the faithful will dwell in the presence of God for eternity.

24:12-18 Since Israel had come out of a nation wherein religious rites and ceremonies were the result of religious men who had invented imagined gods and religions, the remainder of this book describes correct forms and regulations concerning people, places, rites and ceremonies that would stay with Israel for centuries. ***Tablets of stone:*** The ten commandments were written on tablets of stone (31:18; Dt 5:22). However, the instructions concerning the tabernacle and the function of the priests were written on the common writing material of the day. ***A cloud covered the mountain:*** Moses and Joshua remained together for six days before God appeared to Moses only. Moses then went to meet God. He stayed for forty days and nights on the mountain (Dt 9:9). During this time he fasted.

Chapter 25

25:1-9 See also 35:4-19. The gold, silver and bronze that were willingly contributed here came from their plunder of the Egyptians, as well as their conquest over the Amalekites. ***Yarn:*** This was a soft linen that was spun from flax. ***Goat hair:*** This hair was spun and used for the making of tents. ***Badger skins:*** Since badgers were not native to north Africa or the Sinai Peninsula, we would assume that reference here could be to some creature of the sea. ***Acacia wood:*** This wood is sometimes referred to as shittim wood. It is a wood that is commonly found throughout the Sinai Peninsula. ***Oil:*** See 27:20. ***Onyx:*** It is not known specifically what this was. ***Dwell among them:*** Since no structure of man can contain God, the meaning here is that it would be through the tabernacle that God would make His presence known. ***Sanctuary:*** With the use of this word reference is probably to the entire structure of the tabernacle, including the main tent and the outer court curtain. ***Pattern of the tabernacle:*** See Hb 8:5. In other places it is referred to as the tent of meeting (27:21), tabernacle of the Lord (Nm 16:9), and the tabernacle of testimony (38:21).

25:10-22 See 37:1-29. ***Ark:*** This was the most sacred object of the Jewish nation. It was referred to as the ark of the testimony (vs 22), the ark of the Lord (1 Sm 4:6), the ark of God (1 Sm 3:3), and the ark of the covenant (Dt 10:8). If we consider a cubit to be about 18 inches or about 40 centimeters, this chest that was made of acacia wood would be more than one meter long (3 feet, 9 inches) and 60 centimeters wide and deep (2 feet, 3 inches). Within the ark were placed the two tablets of stone that God gave to Moses that bore the ten commandments (31:18). ***Mercy seat:*** Measuring the same dimensions as the ark, the mercy seat symbolized God's mercy in His atonement for the sins of Israel. ***Cherubim:*** First mentioned in Genesis 3:24, these were an order of angels who symbolized the presence of God. The form into which these were made is not known.

25:23-30 The table of showbread was about the same size as the ark. It was also made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. Showbread was to be placed on the table continually in order to symbolize the perpetual care of God for His people. The twelve loaves were to be changed every Sabbath (Lv 24:5,6).

25:31-40 It is interesting that archaeological evidence proves that the lampstand existed as far back as 1,400 B.C., confirming this description of what the lampstand resembled. There were six branches to the lampstand, with one stem, thus making seven saucer-like ends to each branch. These were lite at night in order to give light in the tabernacle. ***After the pattern:*** This is another exhortation that all things be made according to the directions that God gave Moses. The meaning is more than directions for proper construction. God wanted to remind the people that the religious behavior and symbols of their life should be according to His directions, and not patterned after the polytheism of Egypt from where they came.

Chapter 26

26:1-14 The dimensions of the tabernacle were 15 feet by 45 feet (about 4.5 meters by about 14.7 meters). The tabernacle was built in order to be mobile. Not only would Israel move this tent structure throughout the wilderness in their forty years of wandering, but when they came into the land of promise they were to move the tabernacle among the possessions of the tribes. God's original plan was that there be no permanent structure in Israel that symbolized His presence.

26:15-30 The detail into which the Lord goes to have the tabernacle constructed is not without purpose. There was no such structure in Egypt, and thus after construction, the nations that would know Israel after their departure from Sinai could not accuse them of making a copy of something they had experienced in Egypt. The detail of construction would be a witness that there was divine intervention and revelation concerning the structure. We also must not forget that the design and quality of the tabernacle itself was for durability. The use of tabernacles as this would stay with Israel for centuries. God's original plan was that the tabernacle be the only symbol of His presence in Israel. It was to be moved among the tribal possessions, and thus no permanent location or structure was in the original plan of God for Israel. The tabernacle was to be continuously rebuilt and moved among the possessions of Israel. The plans in this context were given in detail in order to give guidelines for reconstruction because a tent made of canvas would last only about 10-15 years.

26:31-37 The purpose of the veil was to divide the tabernacle into two rooms, the holy place and the most holy place. The ark of the testimony was to be placed in the most holy place. In the holy place were to be placed the table of showbread, the candlestick, and the altar of incense that was placed just before the veil. Since the high priest was the only one allowed to enter into the most holy place, the symbolism was established at this time for Jesus who would later enter into heaven through the veil for the sins of all men (See Mt 27:51; Hb 10:19). Since there is New Testament reference to the tabernacle, with its veil, we must conclude that at this time God was having Israel build an illustration of what would take place in reference to the redemptive work of His Son centuries later. We must conclude, therefore, that the very existence of the tabernacle and its construction was not meant to satisfy Israel's desire for a symbol of God's presence, but to set the stage for the coming of the Son of God and the resulting church.

Chapter 27

27:1-8 See 38:1-7. The altar of burnt offering was placed just outside the tabernacle, but in front of the outer court of the tabernacle. The laver was placed between the altar of burnt offering and the entrance to the tabernacle. The altar of burnt offering was the continual reminder of Israel's need for the atoning sacrifices for their sins. Since the altars of Israel were to be made of uncut stone (20:24,25), it is believed that this altar was a boxlike structure that was filled with dirt. The sacrifices were then made on top of the structure. The horns on the altar signified God's protection and ability to help (1 Kg 1:50). During a sacrifice on the altar these horns were smeared with blood (Lv 4:7).

27:9-19 ***Court:*** The court, or outer fence of cloth, enclosed the tabernacle itself. It was a rectangle of about 46 meters (150 feet) by 23 meters (75 feet). The construction of the tabernacle complex began from the most simple and progressed to the more ornate. No unclean person could come inside the court area. The court fence of cloth was simple, but the tabernacle was more ornate. In the tabernacle itself, all the priests could function, but in the most elaborate area (the most holy place) only the high priest could go, and then only once a year. The symbolism was that only God's anointed could go into the most sacred place, whereas the most common had to stay at a distance, separated by the holy place, and then the outer court.

27:20,21 The pure oil was beaten from olives that were picked just before ripening. The oil lamps were to be burning every night, which burning probably symbolized that God's presence would never leave Israel (See 30:8; 1 Sm 3:3).

Chapter 28

28:1-5 The garments that are described in this chapter were for the high priest, for Aaron and his successor. The purpose

for the ornate garments was for two reasons. First, the garments were a sign to all that God had designated the heritage of Aaron to function as priests throughout the generations of Israel. The style of their clothing would be a reminder to both the people and Aaron's sons that they were established as the mediators between God and Israel. Second, the ornate beauty of the priests' garments brought their clothing into conformity with the beauty of the tabernacle.

28:6-14 ***Ephod:*** This part of the priest's clothing was a waistcoat. It had a front and back and was strapped on the body of the priest with straps over the shoulders to hold it in place. The names of the tribes of the children of Israel were engraved on the onyx stones, signifying that the priests carried the responsibility of being the mediators for the people before God at all times.

28:15-30 ***Breastplate:*** This part of the attire of the priests was fastened to the ephod. It symbolized judgment in reference to the oracles of God. Upon the breastplate that was close to the heart of the priest, were again written the names of the children of Israel. The priest thus functioned as the one before whom judgments were sought from God.

28:31-35 ***Robe:*** This blue garment was worn under the ephod and breastplate. Pomegranates and bells of gold were to be placed on the hem of the robe. The pomegranates symbolized fruitfulness. Some have thought that they represented God's nurture of the soul. The bells were to prove that the priest was in service inside the tabernacle when the people could not see him.

28:36-39 ***Turban:*** The "mitre," or turban, was to be worn on the head of the high priest. The phrase "Holiness to the Lord" was to be engraved on the turban in order to remind the people that the high priest portrayed the holiness of God. The portrayal of God to be holy through the garments of the high priest was to inspire them to be likewise (See Lv 11:45). The work of the high priest was to bring the people before God. It was his task to present them as a holy people (Compare Ti 2:14; Hb 12:14).

28:40-43 As the high priest, the other priests were also dressed in order to distinguish them from the people, as well as to signify that they were separated from the people for the ministry of the people. If the priests did not adhere to the clothing that is herein prescribed, they were subject to the death penalty.

Chapter 29

29:1-9 The clothing of the priests was described in chapter 28. In this chapter the priests themselves are consecrated. They are set apart for the service for which God had chosen them. Aaron was set forth as the high priest, and his sons as priests (See Lv 8:7-9). These men were established as priests for the rest of their lives. Their successors would also be priests for life. Since Christians make up a royal priesthood (1 Pt 2:5,9), after the pattern established for priests of God, they also are on duty as priests for the rest of their lives. Jesus is now functioning as our high priest (Hb 5:6), but all Christians function as God's priests to the world.

29:10-18 ***Sin offering:*** One of the conditions for the priests to offer sin offerings for the people was that they first had to sacrifice for their own sins (See Hb 5:3). ***Put their hands:*** This was an act that signified that the priests symbolically put their sins on the animal that was to be sacrificed. Sin offerings were made in order to illustrate that in reference to our relationship with God, life had to be taken in order to receive atonement. Once the blood was placed on the horns of the altar, the fat was burned upon the altar and the rest of the body parts were burned outside the camp (See Hb 13:11,12). ***Burnt offering:*** Sin offerings and burnt offerings were not eaten by either the priests or the people (Lv 4:1,12; see 10:17-20). The burnt offering focused on the meaning that the one who gave the offering was surrendering his life to God, whereas the sin offering was made for the sins of the one who had given himself to God.

29:19-37 ***Ear:*** The blood on the tip of the right ear of the priests dedicated their hearing to God. ***Thumb:*** The hands of the priests were dedicated to service of God. Toe: The priests' entire walk of life was also dedicated to God. ***Blood and oil:*** The blood of atonement was mixed with the oil of spiritual healing. ***Wave offering:*** This was a symbolic waving of the sacrifice that indicated its dedication to God, though the sacrifice was eaten. ***Eat those things:*** Except for the sin offering and burnt offering, sacrifices were to be eaten either by the priests, the one who gave the sacrifice, or both. The eating of the sacrifice symbolized fellowship between God and the one who made the sacrifice, as well as fellowship between the priest and the one who made the offering.

29:38-46 ***Lambs:*** These were the young and innocent. A lamb was to be offered daily in the morning, and the other in the evening. ***One-tenth of an ephah:*** Some translations use the word "deal" for ephah. This is about seven pints or about three and a half liters. ***Hin:*** This is about a gallon and a half, or a little over five and a half liters. ***I am the Lord their God:*** The ceremonial laws that came with Israel's covenant with God were to be a continual reminder to Israel that God was the one who delivered them out of bondage. Their obedience to these ceremonial laws was a continual manifestation that they recognized and accepted God's deliverance. The ceremonial keeping of the laws in reference to their sin continually reminded them that they needed the atonement of God. Though it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats would bring forgiveness of sins (Hb 10:1-4), all these sacrifices prepared Israel for the final sacrifice for sin in Jesus Christ. The sin offering thus pointed to the coming atoning sacrifice of Jesus. The burnt offering symbolized the commitment of the sinner to Christ. The sacrifices of dedication symbolized the consecration and sanctification of the one making the sacrifices. The fact that the sacrificing was performed daily, meant that their entire lives were consecrated to God (See Rm 12:1). And in obedience through the sacrifices, God dwelt in them, as He does today in Christians through the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 30

30:1-10 ***Altar ... to burn incense:*** This altar was smaller, but similar to the altar of burnt offerings. It was set in front of

the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies. At this altar, God met with the one who was offering incense every day (See Hb 9:4). ***Perpetual incense:*** It was not that it burned continually, but that the action of offering the incense was a daily practice. ***Strange incense:*** The incense that was offered had to be according to God's description (see vss 34-38), thus indicating that obedience must be learned and continued by God's people. ***Atonement ... once a year:*** This took place on the day of atonement. The high priest would place blood on this altar for the atonement of the sins of the people. The symbolism of this altar was in preparation for the work of Christ to come. In Revelation, he incense was used by John to symbolize the prayers of the saints (Rv 8:3). At the altar of burnt offering outside the tabernacle, atonement was made for the sins of the people, while at the altar of incense, a sweet smelling incense went up to God from the worshipers, thus signifying God's continual fellowship with His people. The incense offered on the altar of incense, therefore, completed the sin offering on the altar of burnt offering. In reference to the Christian, his continual offering of prayer after the meaning of the altar of incense is meaningful because of the atonement of his sins at the altar of burnt offering. Because Christ became the sin offering for the saints, they have the privilege of having their continual prayers answered as they go up to God as a sweet-smelling sacrifice.

30:11-16 ***Take a census:*** Earlier accounting of the population of Israel was probably a guess as to the number of people in Israel. But here the purpose of the accounting is to request a free-will offering from the Israelites. ***Ransom for his soul:*** The word "ransom" means expiation. What was here required was a tax for every male of Israel who was twenty years old and older. The amount that was required, a half shekel, was small. Since everyone was to pay the same, the tax equalized everyone, rich and poor. The rich could not claim any advantage over the poor by being able to contribute more. Everyone had to pay the same, and thus be considered the same in reference to God's favor. ***Atonement money:*** It was atonement money in the sense that it reminded the giver that in no way could one atone for his own sins. Since the contribution was only a half shekel, one would rightly conclude that the greatness of his sins could not be bought, no matter how much or how little one gave. Since atonement cannot be bought, then no amount of money can pay the price for our sins. ***Service of the tabernacle:*** This contribution probably became an annual obligation tax in Israel in the years to come (2 Ch 24:9). This is the tax to which Peter referred in Matthew 17:24-27.

30:17-21 ***Laver:*** Placed between the tabernacle and altar of burnt offerings, this bronze bowl was designated for ceremonial washing. The priests were to wash themselves after making sacrifices before entering the tabernacle. They did this in order to symbolize their sanctification as priests before God.

30:22-33 ***Perfumer:*** This was the art of apothecary. Those who had this skill knew how to make this special oil from the four designated ingredients. The mixture was to be used first to anoint the tabernacle and its furniture in order to set them apart for their intended function. Once the tabernacle and its furniture were sanctified, no one was to touch them except those who were also sanctified. Thus the priests were also anointed with oil in order to be sanctified for their service in the tabernacle.

30:34-38 The incense was to produce a sweet-smelling aroma for the priest who conducted sacrifices at the tabernacle. Though the aroma of the incense would remind the people of the pleasant atmosphere of God's presence, it also had a very practical use. In the midst of many slayings of animals for sacrifices, the sweet aroma of the perfume aided the senses of the priests who had to work in such an environment.

Chapter 31

31:1-11 The principle behind the appointment of skilled artisans to perform the work of building the tabernacle and its furniture is that God will not do for man what man can do for himself. God gave the generic description of what had to be done. It was the duty of the skilled artisans to use their judgment as to how to make the materials and determine many of the details. These two men possibly had great leadership skills, and thus through them God wanted to direct the building of the tabernacle according to His own will. ***I have filled him:*** Bezaleel was inspired by the Holy Spirit to carry out the instructions to build the tabernacle. With his assistant, Aholiab, he was to create the beauty of the tabernacle in a way that it would manifest the splendor of God. ***Wisdom:*** He was given wisdom to lead those who were chosen to complete the tasks set before them. His judgments were thus inspired in order that he lead the workers to comply with the will of God in reference to the construction of the tabernacle. ***Understanding:*** This was the ability to organize the parts of the tabernacle to be completed in order to organize the workers to accomplish the task of construction. ***Knowledge:*** He was given the knowledge of what materials to use, as well as how to bring these materials together into the final goal of the constructed tabernacle and its furniture.

31:12-17 It is possible that in their zeal to complete the building of the tabernacle, the builders would violate the Sabbath. For this reason, instructions concerning the Sabbath are again reemphasized. ***A sign:*** With circumcision (ch 17), the Sabbath was given by God for a sign of the covenant between Israel and God. These two signs were distinguishing marks that separated Israel from the nations around them. No other nation adopted the sign of the Sabbath. Even during the times of the Roman economy, the Jews alone were known by their keeping of the Sabbath. As long as the Israelites circumcised their males and kept the Sabbath, they were signaling to God that they would keep the covenant. ***Throughout your generations:*** The generations of Israel ended in Christ (Gl 3:26-29). The keeping of the Sabbath is not now a sign of the covenant that Christians have with God. It was a sign given only to Israel, and thus excluded all other nations, including Christians who are now the nation of God. For this reason, the Sabbath is no longer a sign of a covenant between God and His people. ***Put to death:*** The keeping of the Sabbath was the individual's recognition that he was in a covenant relationship with God. If the Sabbath were violated, then the one violating the Sab-

bath was proclaiming that he was not in a covenant with God. The death penalty for violating of the Sabbath manifested that Israel was to take very seriously their covenant relationship with God. The Sabbath does not parallel Sunday, since Sunday is not a sign of the covenant that the Christian has with God.

31:18 This event concluded Moses' forty days on the mountain. ***Tablets:*** Moses was initially asked to come to the mountain for the stone tablets (24:12). Once given to Moses, they were to be placed in the ark (25:16). Though Moses later broke the original tablets of stone in his frustration with Israel (32:19), God gave him a set of new tablets on which were written the ten commandments, the Decalogue (34:4; 40:20). ***Finger of God:*** Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and thus does not have a literal finger as a man, we do not know that to which this metaphor refers. The meaning is that the writing was from God, as the writing of man originates from his hands. What is important to remember is that God Himself wrote the commandments on the stones.

Chapter 32
SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF

32:1-6 Less than forty days after Moses departed to go up the mountain, the people fell into apostasy. We do not know how long it took them to build the proposed idol, but after forty days Moses returned from the mountain. Assuming that Moses had deserted them, the people approached Aaron for leadership. However, they demanded of Aaron that he sanction an expression of their own religiosity, that is, build the golden calf. ***Make us gods:*** This is typical of misguided religious people. They want a visual expression of their beliefs. Since men are physical, they want to see physical expressions of their beliefs. It was not that they became atheistic in reference to their belief in God. They simply regressed to wanting some divine visual manifestation of leadership that the magicians of Egypt performed and provided in reference to the religions of Egypt. Because they pressed on Aaron to make the idol, the scenario seems to be that in order to avoid an outright rebellion, Aaron succumbed to the intimidation of some misguided religionists. In a time when Aaron could have stood up against the people as did Moses with moral leadership, he bowed to their requests. The lesson is clear. Unless leaders are willing to stand alone against the misguided desires of the people, they have no right to be leaders for God. ***Calf:*** This was a common form of idols among the Egyptians. The bull represented strength and fertility. As with most ancient idols, the original form was made of wood, and then overlayed with gold. ***These are your gods:*** The apostasy was complete. Focus was now diverted from God to the gods they had created after their own imagination, which imagination was still in the bondage of Egyptian idolatry. ***Aaron ... built an altar:*** It seems that Aaron sought to mix beliefs concerning the God of Israel with the gods the people had created after their own imagination from their Egyptian culture. It could be that some of the Egyptians who came with them in the exodus were influencing them to revert back to the gods of the Egyptians. In order to keep the name of God before the people, Aaron dedicated the altar he built to the one true and living God.

32:7-10 The apostasy of Israel while Moses was on the mountain would be the ultimate test of Moses' moral leadership. He was on a spiritual high with God on the mountain and the people fell to a spiritual low with pagan concepts of gods at the foot of the mountain. God thus informed Moses of the apostasy before he left the mountain in order to help him deal with this spiritual tragedy in Israel. ***Corrupted themselves:*** The people were now "your people" which he, Moses, had brought out of Egypt. Since they had given themselves over to idol gods, God gave them over to themselves. Once given over by God, they were under His condemnation. ***Stiffnecked:*** This word originally referred to an ox that would not submit to the control of a yoke. The fact that Israel had so quickly turned aside unto the gods of their imagination revealed that they were a stiffnecked people. They were a people who had not yet learned submission. It would be this generation of people that God would eventually take out of the Hebrew culture during the wilderness wanderings. ***Make of you a great nation:*** The patience of God was so great that He would start another nation through Moses, wait for possibly another several centuries, and then call them to a covenant relationship. He would have done this very thing if Moses had not interceded on behalf of Israel. Moses realized that God would rain down judgment on the people. He thus resisted the opportunity to exalt himself by pleading for Israel's case.

32:11-14 We must not conclude that God, in His foreknowledge, did not know that this event would take place. He allowed the rebellion to happen in order to manifest the mediatorship of Moses on their behalf. There would be in the history of Israel another mediator who would be like unto Moses. He, Jesus, would also plead for the deliverance of God's people from the wrath of God. This occasion thus defines the grace of God that would eventually come through Jesus as our mediator with God, before whom we deserve judgment because of our sin. ***Changed His mind:*** Some translations say, "repented." The phrase is an anthropomorphic human expression used to refer to the action of God in reference to the behavior of man. The meaning is simply that God changed His direction from destruction to preservation.

32:15-19 ***The two tablets:*** There is symbolism here in reference to Moses' breaking the two tablets on which the ten commandments were written. When Israel rebelled by going after other gods, they broke the covenant. The act of breaking the two tablets symbolized the breaking of the covenant. Their breaking of the covenant demanded that justice be carried out. But mercy prevailed, and Israel was spared. Once God's wrath was turned, the tablets were once again produced as a sign of the covenant that God would retain with Israel.

32:20-24 ***Drink of it:*** The wood of the idol burned and the gold was ground to powder. The people were made to drink of their own sin. ***Aaron:*** Aaron blamed the people for his weakness. He succumbed to their intimidation to have their religion as they would construct it after the false gods of Egypt. Religious leaders who do not repent of such weakness are no good for truth. Too often religious leaders try to behave as politicians. They seek the opinion of the people, and then

construct religious ceremonies after the desires of the people. In doing so, they lead the people away from God.

32:25-29 ***Slay:*** The punishment was to be severe. Every rebellious soul was to be wiped out of the camp of Israel. It was not a time for repentance on the part of the rebellious. It was a time to extract the rebellious from the people of God. In this way God would deal with those who would seek to turn His people unto their own imaginations. ***Bestow a blessing on you this day:*** The fact that the Levites performed the executions exalted them to their function as the protectors of the will of God among the people (See Nm 3:6-13). They were the proxy judges through whom God slew the rebellious of Israel.

32:30-35 The breaking of the tablets indicated the breaking of the covenant with the nation, though God continued in His covenant that He had made with Abraham (Gn 12:1-4). At this time, after Moses had interceded for the nation that they be spared from destruction by God, Moses went up the mountain again before God to mediate on their behalf for atonement. If God would not forgive them, then he asked if he could be cut off from fellowship with God for the sake of the nation (See comments Rm 9:1-3). ***Blot out of My book:*** God's answer to Moses was that accountability for sin rested with individuals. Though to this point in the narrative we get the impression that the entire nation went into apostasy, the truth is that certain individuals participated in and led the rebellion. We must not judge the whole by the sins of the few, though the whole may be led into apostasy by the few. But for the nation, Moses worked as a true mediator. He confessed their sin before God, sought for God's forgiveness on behalf of the people, and then offered himself as a sacrifice for the people. ***The Lord plagued the people:*** There were consequences for their rebellion. Though the sin was forgiven, they had to live with the consequences.

Chapter 33
SECOND SET OF STONE TABLETS

33:1-3 An angel: Though God has accepted Moses' intercession and their repentance, one thing changed in God's commission to them to go to the land of milk and honey. God would send the angel before them, but He Himself would not go with them. If He were with them, He knew that He would have to bring down judgment on them because they were a stiffnecked people. For this reason, God stayed at a distance lest He destroy them.

33:4-6 Because God said that He would no longer personally be with them, the people were saddened. They thus realized the result of their sin, that it brought a distance between the sinner and God (See Is 59:1,2). ***Ornaments:*** As a test of their repentance, they were to remove the ornaments that would possibly cover up any sign of remorse.

33:7-11 Reference here is to Moses' tent, which is also translated "tabernacle." ***Outside the camp:*** Because of the sin in the camp of Israel, Moses' moving of his tent outside the camp of Israel signified that if people wanted to call on God through Moses, they had to go outside the camp. God grieved over the sin of Israel, and thus Moses' removal of his tent outside the camp of Israel illustrated to the people that God could not dwell where sin was. ***Assembly:*** Some translations use the word "congregation" to translate the Hebrew word that is used here. But the word "assembly" better defines the meaning. It was not a tent or tabernacle in which people assembled, but a structure around which they assembled.

33:12-17 This is the third time that Moses interceded for Israel (See 32:11-14, 30-35). It is here that Moses was reassured by God that He would be with him as he led the people from Mt. Sinai. Moses was thus calling on the grace of God to overlook their sin in order to be with them as a nation. ***My presence will go with you:*** With the reassurance of this statement, Moses could confidently lead. Strong leaders perceive the presence of God in their lives. The power of their leadership is in their confidence that God is leading them in their destiny to fulfill His will in their lives.

33:18-23 ***Show me Your glory:*** The more one experiences the presence of God, the more one desires to experience more of the glory of God. Here Moses seeks to walk by sight, and thus the request was bold. ***While My glory passes by:*** It is the glory that would pass by Moses. Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), we must conclude that the inspired writer here uses metaphor to explain the presence of God. Specifically, an anthropomorphism is used, that is, human characteristics are applied to God. Since there is no language of man that can explain the incomprehensible God who is spirit, what transpired here leaves us wanting more. But the God who here reveals Himself in some way to Moses is beyond the definitions of the words in our dictionary. The biblical interpreter would do well to caution himself concerning passages as this, lest he bring the incomprehensible God down to a being that is no greater than the definition of our words or bodily forms. God is beyond the definition of our words.

Chapter 34

34:1-4 Now that the people had restored themselves to God, it was time for God to renew the covenant. Moses thus ascended the mountain again in order to receive the law that was written on tablets of stone. On this occasion Moses would have to make the tablets, and God would write upon them, whereas on the first occasion God both made the stones and wrote upon them (32:16).

34:5-9 The nature and character of God are here explained in the words merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, and forgiving. God is merciful, but merciful only to those who are repentant (See Hb 6:4-6).

34:10-16 What God would now do in the lives of the Israelites would inspire awe. He would drive out the Canaanites before them, and give them the land that He had promised to Abraham. ***Do not worship any other god:*** It was not that there were other gods besides the one true and living God. It was that men create a god after their own image in order to justify their misguided religious beliefs and practices. For this reason, Israel was to destroy every image and idol that portrayed the false imaginations of the Canaanites. ***Break their images ... cut down their groves:*** The images, or pillars, and the groves, the Asherim, were objects of worship of both

male and female gods. Immoral behavior was often practiced in conjunction with the hedonistic behavior that eventually led to the sacrifices of children to these pagan gods. Because Israel failed to destroy this culture in the land of Canaan by completely destroying the Canaanites, the beliefs and practices of these pagan religions eventually infected Israel. As a result, the Israelites were exiled from the land into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. It is here, therefore, that God warns them about making any covenant with the people of the land lest they be tempted to intermarry and adopt the gods of the land. ***Prostitute themselves after their gods:*** When one marries one of another belief, he or she will often adopt the beliefs of his or her mate. If a believer marries a person who believes in another god, he or she will often become unfaithful to the true God of heaven. The principle that is being taught here is that the believer must be taught to maintain his or her faith by marrying one of the same faith.

34:17-26 The sin is not in the making of the idol, but in the belief that motivates one to make the idol. God is strict. Not only were they to refrain from imagining other gods, they were not to make any image that would bring their imagination into the formation of something that is physical (See 12:14-20; 13:3-13; 23:15). ***Plowing time and harvest:*** They were to resist the temptation of violating the Sabbath by plowing when it rained, or harvesting when the crop was ready on a Sabbath. Their desire to think of the things of this world must not move them to violate the principle of the Sabbath. ***Feasts:*** See 23:16,17. ***Feast of the Passover:*** See 23:18,19.

34:27,28 The writing of the words was the renewal of the covenant that God had made with Israel. During the forty days that Moses was on the mountain, he wrote the remainder of the words of the covenant, though it was God who wrote the words of the ten commandments on the two stone tablets. ***Forty:*** God certainly gave Moses strength in his fasting for these forty days since no man can go without water for such a period and live.

34:29-35: Because of this time with God on the mountain, the countenance of Moses glowed. While he spoke with the people, his face glowed. But after he spoke, he put a veil on his face. The glowing of Moses' face was a visual evidence to the people that He had been with God on the mountain (Compare Lk 9:29-31; At 6:15; 2 Co 3:7-18).

Chapter 35
CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE

35:1-3 This begins Moses' instructions concerning the building of the tabernacle. In their zeal to build, he first reminds them that they should not forget to honor the Sabbath. The building was not to take place on any Sabbath.

35:4-29 ***Willing ... offering:*** In order to procure materials for the building of the tabernacle, Moses asked for a free-will offering from the people. That which they were commanded to do had to come from a free-will offering, otherwise the providing of the material would not have been a sacrifice. If one is paid for that which he must give as a free-will offering, then he has no fruit from the sacrifice. As a result of the request, the people willingly gave. The people were stirred into action by the opportunity to give freely for that which God had commanded.

35:30-35 ***Bezaleel:*** This man was inspired by God to know how to accomplish the task of building the tabernacle. Aholiab was also filled with wisdom and the skill of an artisan. Since these two men were given the skills to construct the tabernacle, then we must assume that they were to teach others how to perform the tasks since they could not do all the work themselves.

Chapter 36

36:1-7 All the materials for the building of the tabernacle were committed to Bezaleel and Aholiab. When the people brought more than what was needed to build the tabernacle, Moses had to command the people to stop giving. The generosity of their heart was magnified in the fact that he had to command them to stop giving (See 2 Co 9:7). Their giving did not depend on their assembly together to act as one. They came individually because of their commitment to accomplish the will of God.

36:8-38 Israel obeyed all instructions concerning the construction of the tabernacle. Their obedience was manifested in the fact that they desired to follow every detail. To the reader, the exactness of what is described in this section should remind us that when God commands something to be done, He often explains how it is to be done. In this case, the command was to build the tabernacle. But in the command, some of the specifics of how it was to be constructed were also given. The fact that Israel obeyed according to the pattern that God had given reveals that at this time in the history of Israel, they were zealous to follow the instructions of God. For this reason these intricate details are recorded in Scripture in order to give the posterity of Israel an example of how their fathers learned obedience.

Chapter 37

37:1-29 The mention that Bezaleel as the master artisan who built the ark is made here to identify that God, who inspired Bezaleel (36:1) in all necessary skills, was the One who actually built the tabernacle. The inspired writer wants us to know that the work was of God. We thus conclude that through Bezaleel God built the tabernacle and its furnishings, which furnishings included the ark, the most precious piece of furniture of the tabernacle. The detail by which it was constructed manifested the obedience of those who took the raw materials and formed them into the tabernacle and its furnishings. The tabernacle was truly a magnificent structure that testified to the willingness of the builders to do all things according to the will of God.

Chapter 38

38:1-31 ***Inventory of the tabernacle:*** It is difficult to determine the amount of weight in gold, silver and bronze that was used to make the tabernacle. It is estimated that the weight in bronze alone was as much as three tons. When counted together, the weight of all metals that went into the construction

measured in the tons, indicating the generosity of the nation in order to bring to Moses all that was necessary for the completion of the tabernacle. The origin of these metals was Egypt. When Israel departed from Egypt the Israelites plundered the Egyptians of much of their wealth. Since the Israelites freely received much of these precious metals from the Egyptians, they in turn freely gave the same to Moses for the construction of the tabernacle. And since God provided daily for them with the manna and quail, then there would have been little use for the possessions of gold and silver among the people. It is interesting to see the collective thinking of Israel at this time. All the precious metals that they would have considered to be their own individually, they were willing to give to the collective possession of the entire nation. The owner of the tabernacle was the nation of Israel. The contribution of the precious metals, therefore, went from individual ownership to collective ownership in the tabernacle. Their desire to freely transfer ownership from individuals to national interests manifested their desire to be one as a nation. When individuals give to a collective effort, they manifest their desire to be one (See 2 Co 8:4). ***Serving women:*** The one statement in verse 8 is significant in the fact that the mirrors of women who served were also contributed. These mirrors were made of polished bronze, a common article of women from ancient times in Egypt. The women's sacrifice of these mirrors truly manifested their desire to serve the Lord instead of looking at themselves in mirrors. It seems that in verse 8 the women "who assembled at the door" organized themselves together to serve. The phrase "assembled at the door" literally means that they came by groups, thus indicating their organization among themselves to serve.

Chapter 39

39:1-43 ***The Lord commanded Moses:*** This statement is made six times throughout the narrative concerning the making of the garments for the priests (vss 1,5,7,21,26,31). The statement emphasizes again the generic and specific manner by which the command of God was given to carry out both the construction of the tabernacle and the making of the clothing for the priests. The generic command was to construct the tabernacle and make the garments for the priests. The specifics of the command were that God also prescribed how the tabernacle and garments were to be made. The reason for the specifics was to test the explicit obedience of the Israelites in their obedience to every command of God. ***Brought to Moses:*** It took six months to complete the tabernacle. Once completed, everything was brought to Moses for his inspection, since he only had seen the pattern that was given by God. Once inspected, Moses reassured them that they had completed everything according to the pattern that God had showed him in the mountain (vs 43). One purpose for the detailed instructions of the construction was to determine their desire to be obedient to God according to His word. Once the construction was finished, Moses' reassurance of their work manifested God's approval of those who sought to work according to His instructions. Their obedience was opposite to the spirit of idolatry. The Israelites had come out of a culture that created every type of god after the imagination of men who sought to do their own will in religious matters. Israel was tested in her construction of the tabernacle according to the pattern that God had shown Moses in the mountain. She was tested to see if she had given up the spirit of idolatry, that is, construction of religions after her own desires as in the construction of the golden calf. When God approved the work of the Israelites in constructing the tabernacle, His approval was a witness to the fact that Israel had learned her lesson not to construct religion and religious articles after their own desires. Israel was now ready to be the nation of God.

Chapter 40

DEDICATION OF THE TABERNACLE

40:1-38 The setting up of the tabernacle came exactly two years after their departure from Egypt. Anoint the tabernacle: The tabernacle was first erected. Using a special anointing oil, Moses anointed the tabernacle in order to designate it to be holy. Once set apart (sanctified), it was not to be touched by anyone other than the designated priests whose job it was to transport the tabernacle from one place to another (See Lv 8:1-13). ***Everlasting priesthood:*** The word "everlasting" in reference to the priesthood of Aaron and his sons is significant. Herein is a definition of how the word "everlasting" ("eternal") is often used in Scripture. Jesus is the only everlasting high priest (See Hb 7:17,23-25,28). The priesthood of Aaron and his sons ended in Christ. Therefore, his priesthood was "everlasting" until the coming of Christ. The word "everlasting" as an adjective means to exist throughout an intended time of duration. In the statement that Aaron's priesthood was everlasting, God was simply stating that it would not go out of existence until He took it out of existence. When Jesus came, God terminated the existence of the priesthood of Aaron. ***A cloud covered the tent:*** Once the tabernacle was erected, God visibly manifested His approval of what the workmen had done in fulfilling all His commandments concerning the construction. The cloud thus became a permanent feature of the tabernacle. When the cloud moved, the tabernacle was to be moved. When it stood still in one place, the tabernacle was to remain in that place. ***Throughout all their journeys:*** The presence of the cloud by day and the fire by night was a manifestation that God was continually with Israel. Israel had repented of her sin, and thus the coming of the cloud and fire was a continual reminder that God had forgiven their sin, and subsequently would be with them throughout their journeys. Israel was now ready to leave Mt. Sinai and enter the land of promise. Unfortunately, because of their doubt, this would not happen until 38 years after the completion of the tabernacle.

There are several misunderstandings concerning the purpose of the tabernacle that must be rehearsed before the Bible interpreter leaves Exodus. These misunderstandings often come as a result of not understanding the purpose of the tabernacle.

1. The tabernacle was constructed for portability. It was not a structure that was to focus Israel's faith permanently to one location as with the building of the temple.

2. The tabernacle was to be moved throughout the tribal possessions in the land of Palestine. Because of the great detail concerning the movement of the tabernacle, God was saying that it be made available to all the tribes of Israel. The reason for the mobility of the tabernacle was that it not be "to far" from any tribe all the time. The "too far law" that was given in reference to the offerings assumed that no one tribe would be continually too far from the tabernacle in order to offer burnt offerings. For example, if during one year the tabernacle was located in the southern part of the land, instructions were given in order that those tribes that were too far away could make their offerings where they were. They were "too far" from the tabernacle, and thus God established the "too far law" in order to accommodate them. But we must keep in mind that no tribe was consigned to always be too far from where the tabernacle was annually set up (See Dt 12:21; 14:24). The "too far law" was given only to accommodate temporarily those who were occasionally too far away from the tabernacle.

3. The tabernacle was not to be set up in a permanent location. The "too far law" assumed that the tabernacle was to be continually moved on an annual basis in order that no tribe be continually too far from its presence. God did not want the Israelites to establish a central location of worship, which thing they eventually did in their history. The religions of the world in which Israel existed established central places of worship, which eventually led to the building of pagan temples for local gods. In order to prevent Israel from doing this in reference to the presence of God among them, He originally intended that the tabernacle be moved from one place to another (See comments Jn 4:20-24).

4. The movement of the tabernacle among the possessions of Israel promoted unity. No one tribe became the sole custodian of the tabernacle. No one tribe could claim ownership of the tabernacle. What eventually happened in the history of Israel was the opposite of what God originally intended. This is brought out in the division of Israel into two kingdoms during the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Rehoboam assumed kingship over the two southern tribes, whereupon they claimed the temple that was constructed by Solomon in their territory. Jeroboam claimed the northern ten tribes that were consigned to keep the "too far law" because the temple was built in Jerusalem. What Jeroboam did was to accommodate what the people had to do in reference to the annual sacrifices. Since they were consigned to always be too far from the temple, he built altars in Dan and Bethel in order that the people, who were already keeping the "too far law," stay in their northern possessions (1 Kg 12:25-33). If Israel had obeyed God's original intent by keeping the tabernacle mobile, there would have never been a need for Jeroboam to build these two altars in order to accommodate those who were consigned to keep continually the "too far law."

5. The tabernacle was not a blueprint for the temple. The laws concerning the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus and Leviticus are very detailed. This detail was not given for the purpose of making the tabernacle a building plan (blueprint) for the construction of the temple that was built 480 years later. Keep in mind that after giving the law at Mt. Sinai, including the instructions and building of the tabernacle, God commanded Israel to go up immediately and take the land. If they had obeyed God to take the land immediately, then the tabernacle would have been with them from the time they left Mt. Sinai. God did not intend that it remain with them for a brief time after they arrived in Palestine. God gave detailed instructions for the building of the tabernacle so they would be able to refurbish or reconstruct the tabernacle throughout their history.

6. The tabernacle was a symbolic representation of the presence of God among His people. In Revelation 21:3 the tabernacle was used metaphorically by the Holy Spirit to refer to this principle. The Holy Spirit did not refer to the temple, but to the tabernacle as a symbol of the presence of God among His people. The temple was never in the original plan of God. It was built only to accommodate the desires of David and Solomon. God accommodated the construction of the temple as He accommodated Israel's desire to have a king over them as the nations around them. With the temple, the desire was the same. Israel wanted a temple for their God as the nations around them had temples for their gods. God's original plan was never to have a permanent location that represented His presence. Unfortunately, when a concession was made that was contrary to the original plan of God, there would be consequences to suffer. In reference to the temple, the consequence was the centralization of Israel's faith to a particular location, and the people's ignoring the work of the priests of God throughout the land. Instead of the priests moving among the tribes in their ministry, they confined their ministry to one location. In the Sinai law, God intended that the tabernacle be moved among the tribal territories in order to decentralize the service of the priest.

Leviticus

WRITER

This oracle of God was given to Israel through the inspired hand of Moses. Twenty of the 27 chapters of this book begin with the phrase, *"The Lord spoke to Moses, saying ..."* (See 1:1–3:17; 4:1–5:19). In other cases the Lord spoke to Aaron and his sons (6:9,25; 8:1,2), and at times the Lord spoke to both Moses and Aaron (11:1; 13:1; 14:33; 15:1). It is assumed that during the latter part of Israel's wandering in the wilderness that Moses inscribed the words of this book for the instruction of Israel throughout their eventual dwelling in the land of promise. The actual giving of the laws of the book was between the erection of the tabernacle in the

first month of the second year after Israel's departure from Egypt (Ex 40:17) and the first day of the second month of that same year (Nm 1:1). We assume that the book, however, was written after Israel left Sinai, but before their arrival at the east boundary of the promised land. The date of the actual writing of the book by Moses, therefore, would probably be somewhere between 1,440 and 1,400 B.C. There is no way we can be certain with these dates. We only assume that Moses was inspired to write them by the Holy Spirit while the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness of Sinai. We are only certain that he wrote the books.

BOOK

The translators of the Septuagint gave the name "Leviticus" to this book. It is an appropriate name since the book contains the laws, regulations and ordinances that are directed specifically to the tribe of Levi in order that they perform their priestly duties on behalf of Israel. The book also discusses how the nation and individuals are to approach God in order to remain in fellowship with Him. Instructions are given on how to maintain holiness in order to approach God who is holy.

The teaching of this book lays the foundation for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. It does this by explaining the horrible nature of sin, as well as the power of sacrificial blood that brings man again into fellowship with God.

The key message of Leviticus is that God provides the means by which man can come into His presence. This means is through the atonement of sacrificial blood. Through sacrificial blood men are made holy in order to approach God. The word "holiness" is mentioned 88 times and the word "atonement" 45 times. The key verses would be 17:11, *"For it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul,"* and 19:2, *"You will be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."*

Since the book of Hebrews serves as a commentary of Leviticus, it is not difficult to understand that the root of holiness in the Christian life is initially explained by God in Leviticus. It is in Leviticus that Christians understand that through holiness God wants His people to remain separate from sin. When they sin, however, He seeks for atoning blood that would restore fellowship between Himself and man. And thus the foundation is laid in the book of Leviticus for the necessity of the gospel. Holiness, or righteousness, can never be accomplished on the foundation of living perfectly according to law, for no one can keep all the law perfectly. For this reason, it was necessary that the righteousness of God be revealed through the sacrifice of the cross, which would come over 1,400 years later. Though the Israelites did not understand this message of the gospel, it would eventually be reveal to them with the coming of the Messiah, and then the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles in Acts 2:1-4. At this time, they were only given hope that something was coming

PRIESTHOOD

Though the nation of Israel was a nation of priests to the world (Ex 19:6), God chose the tribe of Levi to function specifically as priests to the nation of Israel. From Aaron's sons, the high priests were chosen. Only the high priest could enter into the holy place of the tabernacle on the day of atonement in order to offer an atoning sacrifice for the nation. The practice of entering into the holy place of the tabernacle would many centuries later be carried out by the crucified Son of God who would enter the "holy place" of heaven on behalf of all those who became priests through their obedience to the gospel that would be revealed through the incarnate Son of God.

The Levites were given 48 cities in the promise land, but no land possession (Ja 21:1-42). They were thus to be supported by the tithes of the nation and the offerings that were brought in sacrifice by the people. The priests' service in the religious ceremonies was from the age of thirty to fifty. They did not serve in any military capacity. They were God's spiritual leadership for the nation, and thus they functioned to continually focus the minds of the people on God and His law. Not only were they to focus the minds of the Israelites on God, they were to also do the same to all nations.

Laws Concerning Worship & Sacrifice
(1:1 – 7:38)

Outline: (1) The burnt offerings (1:1-17), (2) The grain offerings (2:1-16), (3) The peace offerings (3:1-17), (4) The sin offerings (4:1-35), (5) The trespass offerings (5:1 – 6:7), (6) Special instructions for sacrifices (6:8 – 7:38)

Chapter 1
THE BURNT OFFERINGS

Leviticus is linked to Exodus in that God spoke from the mountain in Exodus, and in Leviticus He speaks from the tabernacle. He took the people's attention from Mt. Sinai to the tabernacle that would remain with the nation throughout the wilderness wandering and during their time in the land of promise. Once the tabernacle was dedicated, as recorded in the conclusion of Exodus, God's glory filled it at the beginning of this book. In this move to communicate from the tabernacle, God was preparing Israel for their leaving Mt. Sinai in order to immediately take the land of promise.

1:1-9 ***Spoke to him:*** The writer wants us to understand that though Moses was the one through whom God gave the laws to Israel, they did not actually originate with Moses be-

cause he had some religious inclinations to start a religious nation. Moses was only the mediator through whom the message came. The message was given directly to Moses from God. ***Tabernacle:*** This common Hebrew reference would better be translated "tent." While all man-made religions of the world sought to build elaborate temples and shrines to their gods, the God of Israel worked from a tent. If the Israelites would have been given their own choice, they too would, and eventually did, build an elaborate structure. But the evidence that God was the originator of Israel and her beliefs was in the fact that for the first five hundred years of her existence, God worked through a tent to spiritually lead Israel. ***Assembly:*** Some translations use the word "congregation." But the word "congregation" does not convey the true meaning here because of the modern-day definition of the word. The tabernacle, the tent, was not a place in which the nation assembled. The tabernacle was the place around which the nation assembled, and from which God spoke through Moses to the people. ***Brings an offering:*** The intent to give is first conceived in the heart of the worshiper. He then brings that which he seeks to give. The point is that the priest does not ask the people to give, but the people ask to give. When the spirit of true faith is within an individual, he does not have to be begged to give. He begs to give (See 2 Co 8:4). ***Offering:*** The root meaning of the Hebrew word means "to approach" or "to come near." Throughout the book this meaning is attached to the sacrifices that were brought to the Lord. The gesture of making an offering gave one the right to approach unto the Lord. Without the offering, one did not have the privilege of coming near to the Lord. With the use of the word "sacrifice," the meaning is that one did not approach the Lord without an offering that cost him something. Worship involves offering on the part of the one who seeks to draw near to God. Throughout the discussions of the sacrifices in Leviticus, each sacrifice (burnt, meal, peace, sin and guilt) refers to different aspects of one's communion with God in worship. The meaning is that when one comes to God in worship, he does not come empty-handed. There is no such thing in the Bible concerning worship that does not involve sacrifice on the part of the one who worships. ***His own voluntary will:*** The offering cannot be taken or extracted from the giver by the intimidation of the priests. The offerings must come from the free-will of the giver. Coerced contributions mean nothing to the Lord. The offerings that the Lord accepts are always free-will offerings. ***Burnt offering:*** Or literally, "that which goes up." Except for the skin that was given to the priests, this offering was burned completely upon the altar. With the other sacrifices, the offering was eaten by the priests with the one who gave the offering. But the burnt offering was completely consumed by the fire of the altar. The significance is the total self-oblation of the sinner to the Lord. ***Without blemish:*** Only the animal that was without blemish could be given to the Lord by a sinner who was with blemish. ***Hand upon the head:*** This practice was prescribed for all the animal offerings (See 3:2; 4:4; 8:22; 16:21; Nm 8:10). The meaning is that the offerer would spiritually connect with that which was offered, as well as with the Lord to whom the sacrifice was to be made. ***Make atonement:*** The Hebrew word here means "to cover over." In the burnt offering the sin was overcovered by the sacrifice. Since God cannot be approached with the guilt of sin on one's shoulders, then atonement must be made for sin (Hk 1:13). Through the sacrifice, therefore, one is able to approach God. ***Fragrant aroma:*** It is not that God has a nose with which to smell the sacrifice. The thought is that God "smells" the contrite heart of the one who has been obedient to Him through the offering of sacrifice (See Ph 4:17,18).

1:10-17 ***Turtledoves ... pigeons:*** A provision in the law was here made for the poor. Mary and Joseph, the mother and earthly father of Jesus, made an offering of birds because of their poverty (Lk 2:24). The simple offering of birds does emphasize the fact that it is not what is offered, but the contrite heart of the one who makes the offering. The act of offering was more important than the value of the gift. We would do well to remember this principle when making large offerings of money for specific works of the church. We must rejoice over the contrite hearts that make the offering, not take glory in the amount of the offering. The contrite heart of a widow who would give her last coins to the Lord is as important as one who would give his millions (See Mk 12:41-44). Not only does the last coins of the poor mean more, their contribution is truly a sacrifice.

Chapter 2
THE GRAIN OFFERINGS

2:1-3 This offering consisted of giving finely ground grain (See Gn 4:3; 33:10; Jg 3:15-18). In bringing the grain before the Lord as an offering, the offerer was bringing the fruit of his labors. The offering was produced by the work one did in his fields, and thus the offering was truly a "worship service" to the Lord. The meaning is that one participates in worship to God while preparing with his labor that which is brought to the Lord as a contribution (See comments Ph 4:17). The totality of one's life, therefore, is a "worship service" that is given to God (See comments Rm 12:1,2). When the Christian works, he or she works as unto the Lord (Ep 6:5-8). ***Frankincense:*** This light colored, yellow and aromatic resin was bitter to taste. However, its burning produced a very sweet-smelling aroma. It was used in various ceremonial practices in order to produce a sweet-smelling environment in which the priest and worshipers prepared the sacrifices (See Ex 30:34; Lv 24:7; Jr 6:20; Ss 3:6; Mt 2:11). ***Its memorial portion:*** When one offers anything to the Lord as a sacrifice, he remembers the covenant that God has established with him (Compare Lk 22:19; 1 Co 11:24,25). What is remembered is God's covenant and the conditions that men must keep in order to maintain the covenant relationship. ***A most holy thing:*** This was something that was reserved for the priests alone. Since the Levites had no inheritance in the land, other than the cities that were given to them, the Levite families had to be preserved with the free-will offerings of the people. The principle of this law was behind the "corban" (*qorbanim*) gift that was willed for the maintenance of the temple upon the death of the owner, and thus was not available to the real needs of the deceased's family. The Pharisees selfishly extracted the corban gift regardless

of the real needs of a family, which thing God never intended in the meaning of a gift to be reserved for the Levites.

2:4-11 ***Leaven ... honey:*** It is significant that these could be offered as firstfruit offerings, but not as any offering that would be burned. The fermentation of sweet honey would signify something that was corrupted, and thus unclean. The leaven was often used by the Hebrew writers to refer to something that corrupts. Jesus used the term "leaven" to refer to the evil influences of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt 16:6; Lk 12:1). Paul referred to the "unleavened bread" of sincerity and truth, the opposite of that which is leavened (1 Co 5:7,8).

2:12-16 ***Gift of the firstfruits:*** The first cuttings of the harvest were given to the Lord in support of the Levites. The meaning is in the fact that what comes first from man's labors is given to the Lord. When the firstfruits were given, then the laborer had a right to the remainder of the harvest. When one first gives in gratitude to the Lord, then he feels blessed by what is left. The principle is that since God is the provider of all things, then before we consume upon our own lusts what He has given, we must first signal to Him that He is first (See Mt 6:33). God wants firstfruits, not leftovers. He must be first, not an afterthought. Sincere giving comes from those who put God first in all things. ***Salt:*** Salt preserves, and thus the meaning here is to the permanence of resistance to corruption.

Chapter 3
THE PEACE OFFERINGS

3:1-5 The significance of this offering is given in greater detail in 7:11-34. Unlike the burnt offering that was to be totally consumed by the fire as a sin offering to the Lord, the peace offering was a fellowship meal between the worshiper, his family and the priests. The meat of the offering was to be consumed by both priests and worshipers. In most of the offerings a fellowship meal was conducted between the priests and the people who gave the offering. Though the primary purpose of the offering was to bring something before the Lord, the secondary purpose was that God wanted the people to stay in contact with the priests, the religious leaders of the nation. In eating the offering, therefore, priests and people stayed in contact with one another. The meal was an occasion for discussion about religious matters. It was a time for counsel and fellowship with the spiritual leaders of the nation. ***Gift:*** The offering was a gift, or present to the priests, but the offerer received the blessing of being in the presence of spiritual leaders. Those who neglect the opportunity of having fellowship meals with their spiritual leaders, have forgotten their spiritual roots. We must guard against our offerings becoming legalistic ceremonial acts with no opportunity for spiritual encounters with spiritual leaders.

3:6-17 ***Fat:*** The fat of the animal signified that which was stored up for famine times. The metaphorical meaning is to the best that is stored for times of famine must be offered to God. The giving of the fat thus symbolized one's total dependence on God for the future. Cutting away of the fat also had health benefits. The ancient world knew nothing about cholesterol, but God did. In the sacrifices, therefore, the practical reason for cutting away the fat was for their own health. ***Peace offering:*** Since the peace offering was a fellowship meal, then we would assume that peace existed with the worshiper in his relationship with God, as well as between himself and the ones with whom he ate the offering. In 7:11,16 it is explained that the peace offering could also be a praise, vow or free-will offering. The meaning would be that the worshiper expressed his dependence on God in every aspect of life in his relationships with others. ***Perpetual statute:*** Since the fat of the offering was to be consumed on the altar, the perpetuity of the command signified the total dependence of Israel upon God throughout the history of Israel. They could not depend on their stores of grain, but only on God for preservation. ***Your generations:*** God was serious about Israel's keeping the ordinances of the offerings. The exhortation of verse 17 here is repeated seventeen times throughout the book of Leviticus. God gave these instructions because He knew that they would eventually turn from His commandments to follow after their own desires.

Chapter 4
THE SIN OFFERINGS

4:1-35 ***The Lord spoke:*** This statement is made throughout the book of Leviticus. What the Holy Spirit wants us to understand is that when it came to sacrifices and offerings, it was the Lord who made the rules. The worshiper did not have the right to determine what the Lord wanted in reference to those things that were necessary for sin offerings and worship. As God was strict with Israel in reference to this matter, so the Christian must be strict today. Throughout the New Testament we understand what God requires for salvation and worship. These requirements are not the choice of the worshiper. ***Unintentionally sins:*** The Hebrew verb that is used here in reference to sin means "to miss" or "to fall short." The sacrifices were to cover those sins that were committed through ignorance, and thus were not intentional. On the other hand, there were no sacrifices for willful sin (See Nm 15:30; Ex 14:8). Sin that was committed with a haughty spirit in defiance of the will of God, was rebellion against God. But the sin that was committed through ignorance was sin that resulted from the fallibility of man. In this context, the Lord introduced the sin and trespass offerings that were offerings in reference to expiation for sin. God stipulated when these offerings were to be made. ***Anything that should not be done:*** These offerings must take place when any of the following people sinned: (1) the priest (vss 3-12), (2) the assembly of Israel (13-21), (3) a ruler of the people (22-26), and (4) any person (27-35). The animal that was to be sacrificed varied from one group to another, thus the seriousness of the sin of each party was signified by the animal that was offered. For example, the sin of the priest, or the religious leader, was more serious than the sin of the common people, or even the ruler. The blood of the offering for the religious leaders was to be placed on the horns of the altar with sweet incense (vs 7), whereas the blood of the sacrifice of the ruler or the common person was to be placed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering (vss 25,30). ***The blood:*** The use of the blood of the sacrificed animal illustrat-

ed what later happened in history in reference to the blood of Jesus (See comments Hb 9:10-23; 10:19-22). The sprinkling of the blood became a type of that which was to come. The priest here sprinkled the blood before the Lord, smeared it on the horns of the altar, and then poured out the rest at the foot of the altar.

Chapter 5
THE TRESPASS OFFERINGS

5:1-19 In this context there were three cases where a sin offering was needed. (1) ***Does not speak up:*** The first case was when one did not produce testimony of truth when called upon by a magistrate. The sin offering, however, would not relieve the guilt of the one who committed this offense. In order for atonement to occur, there had to be a confession of the sin, as well as restitution in some cases (See 6:5; compare Ja 7:19; Jg 17:2; Mt 26:63; Jn 9:24). (2) ***Touches any unclean thing:*** The second offense refers to one who had come into contact with something that was unclean (See chs 12-15). In this case, someone unknowingly touched something that was unclean, and thus had to offer a sin offering because he had neglected the rites of purification (11:24-31). Once he discovered that he had touched an unclean thing, then the sacrifice was needed in order for him to be restored to fellowship with God. (3) ***If a soul swears:*** If one makes an oath to do something that is right, but does not do it, then he is guilty of violating that which he said he would do. If one made a foolish oath, then it would be wrong for him to keep such an oath. In either case, before one was to make a sin offering, he had to confess his wrong. ***Trespass offering:*** The sin offering in the case of the one who swore foolishly, or did not keep a good oath, was referred to here as a trespass offering. He had to bear the guilt of his trespass against another, for the oath was made in reference to another. The word "trespass" comes from a root Hebrew word that means "to act unfaithfully" or "to act treacherously." The trespass offering, therefore, was an offering that related to human relationships between people. A bad relationship that one had with another affected his relationship with God. One can trespass against one's fellow man by making vain oaths. But one can also trespass against God by withholding the holy things that belong to God, such as tithes, offerings and firstfruits. Since the Israelites were in a covenant relationship with God, there could be no relationship with God if one destroyed his relationship with a fellow citizen of the nation of Israel that was in a covenant relationship with God. The provision for the offering in reference to vain oaths, therefore, was necessary in view of the fact that one could not maintain a covenant relationship with God if he acted either unfaithfully or treacherously against his fellow man. ***He will make restitution:*** If the trespass was against one's fellow man, then there was more to the atonement than saying, "I'm sorry." Restitution was in order before atonement could be granted. The trespass cost the guilty party something. These "fruits of repentance" were necessary in order to demonstrate to the offended, whether God or another person, that there was true remorse over the trespass. The sinner had to do something to show remorse for his actions. It was more than a verbal confession.

Chapter 6

6:1-7 In this section, not only is the right to ownership of property assumed, but also the responsibility of fellow citizens to one another's property is taught. Every citizen was to protect the ownership of his fellow citizen. The laws here given refer (1) to deceit concerning property that was left with a neighbor as a security, (2) the robbery of property, (3) the unjust gain from dealing with another's property, and (4) the appropriation of finding and keeping something that did not belong to the finder. In each case it was the offender who had to disclose the offense, and thus had to suffer the punishment (See also Ex 22:7-13). ***Trespass against the Lord:*** The point is that though the offenses of this context are in reference to a neighbor trespassing against another neighbor, the trespass is actually against the Lord. One cannot expect to have a covenant relationship with God if he trespasses against his neighbor who also is in a covenant relationship with God. ***Fellowship:*** Reference here could be to a partnership between two parties, both having responsibility for the assets of the partnership. ***One-fifth:*** The offender was to add one-fifth to the capital value of the property in his restitution to the owner. Only then would the atonement for the sin be completed. We must not assume in the cases where there was a trespass of one against another that atonement could be secured on the basis of confession only. The trespass offering brought atonement only when the offending brother brought forth fruits of repentance, which in this case was restitution to the one who was wronged. The reconciliation of the two parties, therefore, was more than words.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR SACRIFICES

6:8-13 To this point in the book of Leviticus, the message was directed to the people. Now the message is directed to Aaron and his sons who would be responsible for carrying out the ceremonies of the sacrifices. They were the spiritual leaders of the nation, and thus God gave instructions concerning their duties that were necessary for them to remain in contact with the people. ***Kept burning:*** The fire of the burnt offering was to be continually burning. This symbolized that God continually sought their offerings for sin and that the priest was on duty (See Ex 29:38,39). When an offering was brought to the priest, the fire was already burning for the sacrifice to be made. There is a continual welcome from God for the sin offerings of His people. Through Jesus, the same prevails today as Jesus functions before the throne of God as a perpetual priest for the saints (See Hb 5:6; 7:25).

6:14-23 ***It is most holy:*** Aaron and his sons were to eat of the grain, sin and trespass offerings. Only the burnt offering was to be entirely consumed in sacrifice upon the altar. The "offerings," therefore, were brought in order to support the priesthood of Aaron and his sons who functioned to carry out the priestly duties of the nation. Many of the offerings involved the eating of the grain or meat in a fellowship meal between the offerer and the priests. This practice kept the people in contact with the spiritual leaders of Israel. ***Everyone who touches them ...:*** Though this statement is not clear as to what reference is made, the probable meaning is that only

those who were holy should touch holy things (Compare Is 52:11). ***Offering of Aaron and ... sons:*** The remainder of the grain offering was not to be shared by Aaron or his sons with the offerers. It was an offering that was to be completely used in the offering, and thus, completely burned. This offering was to be carried out every morning and evening throughout the time of their priesthood. For this reason, they were to always have a supply of grain for the offering.

6:24-30 ***In the court:*** This offering was to be eaten in the outer courtyard of the tabernacle structure. It was to be eaten only by those whom God had separated for the priesthood. The blood and fat of the sacrificed animal were not to be eaten, but burned with fire. This action signified total dependence on God since that which was stored by the animal (the fat) was used as oil for the continual burning of the sacrificial fires. As the holy priesthood, Aaron and his sons were to partake of the meat of this offering in order that they function in bearing the sins of the people before the Lord. They were the holy (the separated ones) who ministered the sacrifices for the people in order that atonement for sin be realized. Because they were appointed for this function among the people, God intended that they be supported by the offerings of the people. The nation of Israel was a community of priests to the world (Ex 19:6). However, this community of priests needed the ministry of an inner priesthood. God thus established the inner priesthood of Aaron and his sons to minister to the nation as a whole. In their ministry, they were to function full-time, and thus were to be supported by the nation as a whole. Since there was only one tabernacle to which sacrifices were to be brought, and a great number of people who had to make sacrifices, the priests who were officiating had to be supported full-time in order to carry out all the ceremonies surrounding the sacrifices. It was the obligation of the people, therefore, to support the priesthood of Israel.

Chapter 7

7:1-10 These ritual instructions emphasize the exactness by which God wanted the priests to carry out their duties in reference to the offerings. In this context, emphasis is placed on the portion that was dedicated to the priests for their work as priests. The priests were to have the meat of the offerings, but the skin and fat were not to be eaten. The flour of the grain offerings and parched grains could be kept in storage by the priests, but any meat of the offerings was to be consumed soon after the sacrificial animal was killed. If the meat was kept over, it would spoil.

7:11-38 The peace offerings were communal. They were offerings in which the worshiper was allowed to partake of the offering with the priests and others. The peace offerings consisted of three offerings: (1) thanksgiving offering (vs 12), (2) votive offering (vs 16), and (3) freewill offering (vs 29). ***Thanksgiving:*** This offering was made in reference to what God had blessed the worshiper (Compare Ps 107:22). This offering was to be eaten the same day it was offered, and thus the communal participation of others is assumed (See Dt 12:12). One's friends and family were invited to partake of this offering in order to express thanks together for God's blessings. The thanksgiving offering cost the worshiper something in order to be a true thanksgiving to God who provides us with all things. Because the offering was communal, the worshiper sought to share in his thanksgiving with friends and family. ***Vow:*** In this offering one made a vow to give something to God because of his appreciation for the gracious blessings of God (See Ps 66:13,14; 116:1-19). This offering was free-will in the sense that the worshiper chose to make the offering in gratitude for all that God had done for him. This was as the "purposed giving" of the early church, and the free-will giving that was made in the building of the tabernacle (See Ex 35:5,21). The fact that this offering was accompanied with cakes and unleavened bread indicated that the offering was a communal meal that was shared between priests, friends and the one who made the offering. ***Gift:*** In the peace offering, one was to bring his offering as a gift. No payment could be made for the offering, lest the gift be cancelled because the offerer would be receiving a reward for that which was brought. It was thus a free-will offering that cost the worshiper something. The nature of the peace offering was manifested in the fact that unless there was sacrifice on the part of the worshiper, the offering meant nothing. There could be no gift if compensation was given to the one who brought the offering. The offering had to be a sacrifice by the one who brought it. No one else could pay for another's sacrifice.

Consecration Of The Priests Of Israel (8:1 – 10:20)

Outline: (1) Priesthood of Aaron and his sons (8:1-36), (2) Beginning of the priesthood ministry (9:1-24), (3) Disobedience of Nadab and Abihu (10:1-20).

Chapter 8
PRIESTHOOD OF AARON & HIS SONS

Chapters 1-7 of Leviticus deal with the rituals and ceremonies surrounding the sacrifices of the nation of Israel. In chapters 8-10 Moses wrote concerning the responsibilities of the priests in their role as mediators for the nation. Throughout these instructions there is great emphasis placed on obedience to the directions of how God wants the priests to function in their ministry (See 8:4,5,9,13,17,21,29,34,36). In chapter 8 the priests were designated as the spiritual leaders of Israel and in chapter 9 the tabernacle was inaugurated. In chapter 10 the example of Nadab and Abihu is given in order to stress the importance of doing everything according to the will of God. Since God would have difficulties with Israel throughout their history in reference to obedience to His law, He had to give some very vivid illustrations that obedience must be maintained in their lives.

In the context of the designation of Aaron and his sons, it must be noted that God worked through Moses in order to designate them before Israel. Aaron and his sons did not designate themselves as priests. They were directly chosen by God (See Hb 5:4,5). Also keep in mind that the duties of the priests were to administer the ceremonies and rites that God instituted for Israel. Nowhere is there instruction given that they should control the people.

8:1-9 ***Gather all the assembly:*** There was no secret ceremony to designate the priests. The procedures described in the following scriptures took place before all the assembly of Israel. ***Washed:*** From this day forward, Aaron and his sons were set apart from the rest of the nation. They were no longer ordinary Israelites. They were under strict command to maintain their priesthood uniqueness in Israel lest they pay for their sin with the penalty of death (Ex 30:19-21). As the special spiritual leaders of Israel, they were given great responsibility to perform their work according to the will of God. The performance of their duties as God's representatives gave Israel an example of obedience. ***Ephod:*** See Ex 39:22-26. ***Urim ... Thummim:*** In some way these were used to declare the will of God in matters of judgment (Nm 27:21; Dt 33:8,10). It could be that they were used to receive "yes" or "no" answers from God in reference to decisions that had to be made.

8:10-13 ***The anointing oil:*** The Hebrew word for "anoint" is the root word for which we derive the word "messiah." The Old Testament prophets (1 Kg 19:16), kings (1 Sm 9:16; 10:1), and priests were anointed with oil. In the ceremony of anointing, the anointed one was separated from the people. The anointed person was separated from the people for a special work for the people. Once anointed, the anointed one was given the responsibility to carry out a special work and function for the Lord.

8:14-29 Throughout all the ceremonies to consecrate the priests and the tabernacle for service to God, the Levitical writer here goes into great detail. He goes into detail in order to emphasize the fact that God's designated ministers and ministries are to be committed to Him. They are to be committed to the Lord for the sake of the nation in reference to service to Him. ***Ear ... thumb ... toe:*** It was the duty of the consecrated priests to continually hear (ear) the word of God, occupy his hands (thumb) for the ministry of the people, and walk (toe) in the holiness of their calling.

8:30-36 ***Consecrations:*** Or, designation. The designation of the priests meant that they were not to own property, neither were they to support themselves. They were to be entirely supported by the people in their service to carry out the ceremonial duties of the tabernacle on behalf of the people. They were the spiritual leaders of the people. ***Seven days:*** To seal the ceremony of consecration, for seven days Aaron and his sons were not to go outside the environment of the tabernacle. The seriousness of this command was in the fact that if the instructions were violated, they would suffer the penalty of death. They were to minister the sacrifices of the tabernacle, and thus they were to learn how to be confined to the premises of the tabernacle.

Chapter 9
BEGINNING OF THE PRIESTHOOD MINISTRY

9:1-24 This chapter is a record of the beginning of the work of the officially designated priests of Israel. As the newly designated spiritual leaders of Israel, one of the first things that Aaron did was to offer both a sin offering and burnt offering for himself and his sons. There may be significance in what was offered on this day. The ram could have been in remembrance of the sacrifice provided by God to Abraham instead of his son (Gn 22:9). The goat may have been a reminder of the goat that was killed by Joseph's brothers in order to deceive their father (Gn 37:31). The offering of the calf may have brought to remembrance the sin of Israel in making the golden calf (Ex 32:4). The bound lamb would remind them of Isaac's sacrifice in Genesis 22:7. Regardless of any possible significance in reference to the particular animal that was offered, it is assumed that God wanted Israel to know that they needed the offering of the sacrifices as well as Aaron and his sons. Aaron was imperfect in himself as their priest (Hb 7:27). Only in Christ would there be a high priest who would be without sin and able to enter in before the presence of God on behalf of the spiritual Israel of God. The inability of the Levitical priests to live sinless lives was a continual reminder of the Messianic priest to come.

At the conclusion of all the proceedings of this chapter, God appeared in all His glory in order to put a stamp of approval on what transpired. He also wanted to mark the day as the beginning of a new era for Israel in reference to the function of the priests, as well as His fellowship with Israel. On this day the function and work of Moses changed from himself being the center of reference as a mediator between Israel and God. It was changed to the work of Aaron and his sons in their ministry of the rites of the offerings and the sacrifices.

Chapter 10
DISOBEDIENCE OF NADAB & ABIHU

10:1-7 ***Nadab and Abihu:*** This incident emphasizes the strictness by which God wanted His laws obeyed. ***Strange fire:*** We do not know exactly what law was violated in this case. Several assumptions have been proposed: **(1)** The incense was not made according to instructions (See Ex 30:34-38). **(2)** Fire other than the fire from the altar of burnt offerings was used (See Lv 16:12). **(3)** The offering was not according to the set time for offerings (See Ex 30:7,8). **(4)** The wrong censers were used. **(5)** The two priests assumed the work that was reserved exclusively for the high priest. The violation of any one law would constitute Nadab and Abihu working presumptuously, and thus sinning against what God had commanded. Their death at the hand of God illustrated that obedience was more important than the sacrifice (1 Sm 15:22). ***Do not uncover your heads:*** Though the house of Israel could mourn the death of the two priests, Aaron and his other sons were forbidden to do so lest their mourning in any way be interpreted as condoning the actions of Nadab and Abihu. Moses knew that obedience must be manifested in the lives of the religious leaders of Israel. The death of Nadab and Abihu illustrated this fact. Their deaths was an extreme measure in order to impress on the minds of the people that God must be obeyed. God knew that Israel would eventually forsake His law when they came into the land of promise.

10:8-11 ***Distinguish between the holy and unholy:*** Religious leaders must be able to determine what is right and wrong. The use of strong drink while officiating in the tabernacle service would impair the judgment of the priest. The priest was thus forbidden to use strong drink while on duty.

Since disciples are in perpetual service of God today, it goes without saying that they should not be intoxicated with strong drink that would impair their thinking.

10:12-20 Out of the peace offerings, the shoulder and breast were to be reserved for the priests and their families. Other than the sin offering that was made by the priests on behalf of themselves, it was to be eaten by the priests and their families in a clean place. In this way the offerings were the support for the priests and their families as they officiated in the religious rites on behalf of Israel. On this particular day when the sons of Aaron died, Aaron did not eat of what was rationed to him. Lest it be perceived that he was walking in violation of the commandments of God, Moses questioned his actions. However, after Aaron explained himself, Moses was satisfied with his answer.

Laws Concerning Uncleanliness (11:1 – 16:34)

Outline: (1) Instructions on clean and unclean foods (11:1-47), (2) Purification of women after childbirth (12:1-8), (3) Instructions concerning leprosy and mildew (13:1 – 14:57), (4) Cleanliness concerning bodily emissions (15:1-33), (5) The day of atonement (16:1-34)

Chapter 11
INSTRUCTIONS ON CLEAN & UNCLEAN FOODS

11:1-47 This chapter deals with foods that may (clean) or may not be eaten (unclean) (vss 1-23). Included also are things that makes one unclean by physical contact (vss 24-47). The chapter is written in order to instruct Israel concerning what is clean and unclean, which instructions have no moral or ethical meaning with reference to personal relationships, nor is the concept of "clean" and "unclean" unique in these chapters (See Gn 7:2). The reader must not miss an important point in reference to these instructions. When God gave these laws there were health reasons behind them. He did not have to tell the Israelites why a particular thing was unclean. He often pronounced something as unclean in order to preserve the health of the people. However, in making the pronouncement that something was clean or unclean, the pronouncement became a command, and thus godliness was determined by one's obedience to the command. From this came the commonly used phrase, which is not in the Bible, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." For the Israelites, keeping the "cleanliness" commands of the law was manifesting one's godliness in obedience to the will of God. The cleanliness laws were from God, and thus subject to be obeyed.

Chapter 12
PURIFICATION OF WOMEN AFTER CHILDBIRTH

12:1-8 When considering the instructions of this chapter we must not assume that there is something unclean about childbirth. In the beginning, childbirth was God's command for the populating of the world (Gn 1:28). Bearing children was considered a blessing from God (Gn 33:5). Children were a prize to the marriage of a man and woman (Ps 127,128). In fact, in ancient culture the woman who had no children was perceived to be under some curse. The instructions given here, therefore, must not be viewed as some supposed dim view of God upon childbirth. On the contrary, an understanding of modern medicine helps us to understand the instructions that God gives. This is also true of chapter 15 where instructions are given to guard the health of both child and mother in the process of childbirth and the mother's recovery immediately thereafter. ***Circumcised:*** At this time in the history of Israel circumcision became a sign of the covenant between God and Israel. However, the command for circumcision predated this event by several centuries when God commanded Abraham to circumcise his offspring (Gn 17; see Ex 4:25). Though here given as a sign of the covenant between God and Israel, modern medicine has since demonstrated that a circumcised male is less likely to contact sexual diseases. In this one rite that is given, the point is illustrated that God did not arbitrarily give laws to prove the obedience of Israel. The laws in reference to clean and unclean things had a deeper purpose, the purpose of establishing health practices for the people. Though Israel did not understand the health reasons behind the laws, they did understand that these practices had to be obeyed in order to manifest obedience to God. As the years passed in Israel, the people surely saw some of the health benefits of the laws when they observed the violation of these laws in the nations around them. They certainly saw the same consequences within themselves when the procedures of dealing with unclean things were violated. They did not know about viruses and germs, but they could witness the evidence of sickness when unclean behavior was practiced.

Chapter 13
INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING LEPROSY & MILDEW

We get the word "leprosy" from the Greek word *lepra* which was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *tsara'at* in this context. In many English translations, the word "leprosy" is used to refer to a number of things to which the Hebrew word referred. Since the word "leprosy" is commonly used to refer to a disease of human flesh, it does not fully apply to the "leprosy" that was found in clothing and houses. The word "mildew" would better give the meaning of what the writer wanted to convey when reference was made to physical things other than human flesh. In this context, if a person had leprosy, he was to be excluded from the camp (vss 45,46). But if a garment was contaminated with "leprosy" (mildew), it was to be burned (vss 52,57). If the contamination of mildew was in a house, the contaminated stones were first to be removed (14:40). If this did not solve the problem, then the house was to be destroyed (14:45). When reading the text in reference to physical things, the meaning of mildew should thus be understood. When reference was to human flesh, the word "leprosy" should be understood since leprosy was a disease of the flesh.

13:1-44 It was the duty of the priests to make judgments concerning the presence of leprosy or mildew. In reference to human flesh, there were six different cases of leprosy: **(1)** a scab (vss 2-8), **(2)** a spot on the flesh after a boil (vss 18-23), **(3)** a burn (vss 24-28), **(4)** a rash in the hair or beard (vss 29-37), **(5)** spots on the skin (vss 38,39), and **(6)** a sore on a

man's bald head (vss 42-44). If the sore was pronounced leprous, then the individual was to be shut up for seven days. If the sore did not spread, then the individual was confined for another seven days. If the sore again did not spread, then the individual was pronounced clean. The person was to wash himself and his clothes and go forth as clean.

13:43-46 If a person was determined to be leprous, he was to be separated from society. His clothes were to be torn, his hair allowed to grow long, and his upper lip was to be covered. These were all signs of a leprous person. If someone approached a leprous person, the leprous person must pronounce himself as leprous. The leprous person was essentially dead to society. The medical reason for these procedures was that the type of leprosy that was contagious would not be spread to the rest of society. Though the people knew nothing of the medical reasons for these laws, they were to obey them in order to demonstrate their obedience to the commandments of God.

13:47-59 Reference here is to different types of mildew that would affect clothing. If such mildew was found on any garment, the garment was to be removed, and then isolated for seven days. If the mildew spread further throughout the garment, then it was to be pronounced unclean and burned. If the mildew had not spread throughout the garment after seven days, then the garment was to be washed and set aside for another seven days. If the infected areas did not change in color, then only the affected areas were to be removed and burned. If the spots had changed color, then the spots were to be torn from the garment. If the spots had spread after the second seven days, then the whole garment was to be burned. If the spots disappeared after the garment was washed, then the garment was washed again and pronounced clean.

Chapter 14

14:1-20 The instructions concerning the restoration of the leper to the community was for the purpose of making a public announcement that the leprous person was no longer to be shunned. The formerly leprous person was first brought to the priest outside the camp. When the priest found that the person no longer had the disease, then the healed person was to take two birds, cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop in order to perform the ceremony of cleansing. Once the priest declared the person to be clean, the bird was released to freedom, thus indicating that the healed person was free to rejoin the community. Once he washed himself, shaved all the hair off his body, and washed his clothes, he was to come to his tent and remain outside for seven days. After this seven days, and there was still no sign of the disease, then he was to shave his head and beard and eyebrows. He was then to wash his clothes and body. He could then rejoin his family and the community. The ceremony of sacrifices was a series of fellowship meals celebrating that the formerly leprous person was healed. The ceremony was similar to the inauguration of the priest, thus signifying that the person was brought back into society (See 8:23,24).

14:21-32 In all of the laws concerning requirements for sacrifice, the poor were never marginalized. In the case of the proclamation of the leper being cleansed, two turtledoves or young pigeons took the place of the animals for the burnt offering and the sin offering. A tenth of an ephah served for the grain offering. However, the requirement for the trespass offering was not reduced. Since the trespass offering was relational in the sense that it was given for the reconciliation of individuals, the celebration for restoring the formerly leprous person to the fellowship of the family and community was to be joyous.

14:33-57 In this section the writer turns to mildew or lichen that is found in physical things as the house. The instructions here are given in reference to Israel's coming into the land of Canaan, and after they had built houses for themselves. We would also understand from these instructions that when Israel did possess the land, they would possess many of the houses of the Canaanites they conquered. Lest they move into infected houses, these instructions are given in order that they cleanse every house they possessed when they came into the land. ***I put the mark of mildew:*** That is, God would allow the normal course of the work of mildew to happen within the structure of a house. God wanted the Israelites to know that there was no such thing as evil spirits cursing people or houses when they came into the land. Such superstitious beliefs were harbored by the Canaanites, and thus in these instructions God wanted His people to know that there is no such thing, and thus they were not to be superstitious about such in reference to physical things. ***Tell the priest:*** As in leprosy, so in the case of mildew. The priest was to function as the authority to make judgments concerning the mildew. The first step taken in an infected house was that the contents of the house were to be removed and the house shut up for seven days. If the mildew spread during the seven days, then the infected stones of the house were to be removed to a place outside the city that was designated unclean. The house was then rebuilt. However, if the mildew returned, the house was to be destroyed. If the house was declared clean, then there was a public ceremony that made it known to everyone that the house could be entered as a dwelling. The public proclamation made it known that the house was not to be shunned by anyone, and thus the inhabitants could invite others into the house.

Chapter 15

CLEANLINESS CONCERNING BODILY EMISSIONS

15:1-15 **I**nstructions concerning bodily emissions involved pronouncements that one was unclean. The bodily emissions included both the primary sexual organs, as well as any unhygienic emission that is here considered unclean. If one touched a person who was considered unclean, he also became unclean, and thus would have to go through the purification rites that are herein given. The earthen vessels that were used for purification were to be broken. The one who had an issue was to wash himself and his clothes seven days from the cessation of the emission. After being cleansed, he or she was to offer for atonement a sin offering and a burnt offering of two turtledoves or two young pigeons. Since the one who was unclean was out of fellowship with the religious community, after the offerings he was again restored to the religious community.

In reference to clean and unclean concerning physical things as emissions, it is difficult in the Old Testament to distinguish between the two in reference to one coming before

God in worship. The total life of the individual could not be separated into a secular or religious life. What affected one, affected the other. If one were physically unclean, he or she could not approach God. One's physical cleanliness was necessary for one to approach God. The Old Testament rites concerning hygiene, therefore, were important in reference to one's relationship with God in worship.

15:16-18 The point here is that the holy must not be defiled. Uncleanness in reference to sexual fluid emissions was not sinful, though one was to wash his body and clothing in order to remove the uncleanness. In reference to sexual intercourse, the only defilement would be for a man to have intercourse with a menstruate woman.

15:19-24 As in the preceding rites of cleanliness, time, bathing and the cleaning of one's garments removes the uncleanness. No sacrifices were to be made to restore a state of being clean simply because no sin was involved in this natural sexual activity of life. Again, one was guilty of uncleanness if he had sexual intercourse with a woman during her time of menstrual impurity.

15:25-33 A woman must wash herself on the eighth day after waiting seven days. It is on the eighth day that an offering of two turtledoves is to be offered in order to restore her cleanliness and fellowship with society. These commands in reference to Israel's cleanliness separated them from the nations around them. The surrounding nations did not obey such strict laws of cleanliness, and thus their uncleanness separated them from Israel. It is not that Christians are under the Sinai law of the Old Testament, but it is wise to lead a life of cleanliness. When Christians keep themselves clean, they give a testimony to others that their cleanliness is in honor of God. And if they keep themselves clean according to the Sinai law, this does not mean that they are being subject to the law.

Chapter 16
THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Chapter 16 is introduced by the seriousness of the subject of atonement with the death of Nadab and Abihu. This high point of the book of Leviticus is a discussion of atoning sacrifices that reconciled two parties together, specifically the continued reconciliation of Israel who was in a covenant relationship with God. The rites given in this chapter are to make it possible for the high priest to approach God without suffering his own death as a result of violating the laws of God. The high priest could not approach God whenever he so chose, neither at any time he might choose.

Understanding the language of this chapter is aided by Hebrews 9 where the atoning work of Jesus is explained in reference to His high priesthood for the Christian. Though the high priesthood of Aaron is a figure of that which Christ would do for the redeemed, Christ's high priesthood explains the inadequacy of the high priesthood of Aaron. The rites and ceremonies explained in this chapter were only a shadow of the greater to come, the substance, who was Christ.

16:1-19 So that he not die: These instructions are given to preserve the life of Aaron, lest he act presumptuously by entering the holy place of his own will and at a time he might choose. Before entering the holy place, Aaron was to be dressed correctly. He was to present a sin offering for himself and his family. He was to offer incense that would form a cloud to cover the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. Once in the holy place, he was to sprinkle the mercy seat with blood, and the area before the mercy seat. He was to do this in atonement for himself and his family. He was to make atonement for the people by sprinkling the blood of the sin offering. In this ceremony, atonement was also made for the altar and the tabernacle. All the rites of this ceremony were to be done for the atonement of Israel because of their inability to live perfect lives before God. The rites for atonement, therefore, were based on the fact that no man can live perfectly before God (See comments Rm 3:9,10,23).

16:20-34 The term "scapegoat" finds its origin in comments on this text that William Tyndale used to explain what transpired in the action of sending a goat out of the camp of Israel with the sins of Israel. However, this is not a term that would translate the Hebrew word for goat that is used in this text. The word "scapegoat" is only an interpreter's definition of what transpired with this rite. In the text, two goats were chosen, from which one was selected to be the "scapegoat" for the people. Aaron was to cast lots to select the goat that would be offered as a sin offering for the people, while the other would be sent out of the camp. ***The head of the live goat:*** After Aaron had put his hands on the head of the live goat, this goat was sent out in order to symbolically take the sins of Israel outside the camp. ***The goat will bear on him all their iniquities:*** This figure was later applied to Jesus as He bore our sins on the cross (Jn 1:29). The figure is used throughout the Old Testament as a reference to the sin of the individual being taken away in forgiveness (See Ps 32:1; Is 53:4,12). In order for sin to be forgiven, it must be taken away by another. In this context, the sin was symbolically carried away by the goat. In the context of the Christian's salvation, the sin is carried away by Jesus Christ. This is the good news to come that was indicated by the sacrifice.

Laws Concerning Holy Living
(17:1 – 20:27)

Outline: (1) Laws concerning food (17:1-16), (2) Laws concerning holy behavior (18:1-30), (3) Laws for community relationships (19:1-37), (4) Laws concerning punishment (20:1-27)

Chapter 17
LAWS CONCERNING FOOD

17:1-9 ***To the door of the tabernacle:*** The purpose for the instructions concerning the slaughter of animals for offerings and food before the tabernacle, whereupon the priest would sanctify the offering, was that Israel not be led astray to superstitious beliefs. By bringing the animal "before the Lord" at the tabernacle, the priest could sanction the slaughter in the name of God. The offerer would thus be reminded of the one true and living God. We must keep in mind that the laws concerning the bringing of sacrifices to the priest were also given to bring the offerer to the priest. This kept the people in touch with their spiritual leaders, and thus in contact with

direction from God through the priests. ***Sacrifices to devils:*** These were the superstitious beliefs in demons and spirits that prevailed throughout the pagan nations surrounding Israel. In order that Israel be guarded against belief in the existence of such figments of the imagination of men, they were to bring the animals before the presence of the Lord in order to slaughter them for offerings and food. This was God's system to guard Israel from being carried away into idolatry. If the people brought their sacrifices to those who believed in the one true and living God, then their minds' attention would always be focused toward God's representatives to Israel.

17:10-16 It is the blood that makes atonement: Because it was the blood that was the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people, their life depended on the blood. For this reason the blood of the animal was a most holy thing in Israel. If one ate blood, therefore, he was cut off from Israel for he violated that which was sacred in reference to atonement. ***Cover it with earth:*** In respect of the blood, even the blood that came from a wild animal in a hunt was to be covered with dirt. ***It is the life of all flesh:*** In these instructions God is certainly preparing Israel for the eternal sacrifice of blood that would come from the Son of God. Since the life of the animal was in the blood, then eternal life in the future would be purchased by the blood of the Son. He would give His blood that we might live as the animals gave their blood in the Old Testament that atonement might be acquired. However, there was no true forgiveness through the blood of animals (Hb 10:1-4). The realization that it was impossible for the blood of animals to take away sins prepared the people for a sacrifice that would take away sins permanently. That sacrifice would come about 1,440 years from the time these laws were given, and it would come through the sacrificial blood of Jesus. The giving of law, therefore, made people conscious of their inability to keep law perfectly (Rm 7:7). It made them conscious of their need for mercy and grace from God.

Chapter 18
LAWS CONCERNING HOLY BEHAVIOR

18:1-5 The law of God applies to the most intimate matters of human existence and experience. Israel's separation from the nations around them meant that their behavior would be different from the nations who had created a god after their own imagination and religious behavior after their own desires. The Israelites were to be different in their behavior because they belonged to the Lord. The whole of their lives, therefore, was to be governed by the will of God. The Israelites were promised that if they kept the will of the Lord they would live and continue to reside in the land of promise.

18:6-23 It is difficult to determine if this context refers exclusively to marriage relationships, or to men and women in general. It does, however, at least refer to the relationships between men and women. For this reason, many marriage concepts of today are taken from this context. ***To uncover his nakedness:*** That is, to have sexual intercourse. Contrary to the nations around Israel, incest was strictly forbidden in Israel. ***Your brother's wife:*** This is not a prohibition of the levirate law (See Gn 38:8). Reference is to taking one's brother's wife while he was still alive. ***Her sister as a rival:*** In other words, while one's wife is alive, the husband is not to marry her sister. ***Molech:*** Some translations read, "pass through the fire to Molech." However, the words "the fire" are not in the Hebrew text. Reference is probably to giving their children to the temples of the false god Molech wherein they would be used as prostitutes for illicit sexual activities. The Canaanites morally digressed because of illicit sexual practices, and for this reason they were expelled from the land (See Gn 15:16). Since God knew that Israel would be affected by the moral degradation of the Canaanites, whom they would not drive completely out of the land, He placed this law here in order that they be reminded of their violation of God's will. They could read these passages when they marched as conquered people into the captivity of the Assyrians and Babylonians. They could not blame God for God had warned them.

18:24-30 God had promised that He would give the land of the Canaanites to Israel (Gn 15:16; 50:24,25). However, the promise was conditional. It was conditioned on their obedience to His law. If Israel would allow themselves to be influenced by the Canaanite culture, and thus digress into the immorality of the people they were to dispossess, then they would give up their right to the land. They would give up their right to the land because they, through their disobedience, would prove that they had no right to take the land from a disobedient people, the Canaanites.

Chapter 19
LAWS FOR COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

19:1-4 ***You will be holy for I am holy:*** Leviticus is given in order to establish Israel as a holy nation that was separated in behavior from the nations around them. Throughout this chapter various laws are given that would identify the Israelites as a nation that did not create a religion after their own human instincts. Their holy behavior would be a witness to the world that their laws for morals and civil relationships were not from man, but from God. The very nature of the laws would identify them as being from God, not man.

19:5-10 In order to maintain their separateness from the surrounding nations, Israel was to respect the peace offerings that dealt with human relationships. They were to be concerned for the poor and the aliens by allowing portions of their fields to be harvested by both the poor and the aliens.

19:11-37 In order to maintain human relationships, stealing was forbidden, as well as bearing false witness and lying. They were not to make false oaths to their neighbor, nor speak the name of God in vain. They were not to take advantage of the handicapped as the deaf and blind. They were forbidden to make unfair judgments, be the bearer of false tales, hate their neighbor, take vengeance, or mix breeds (producing hybrids, see Dt 22:9-11), seeds and fabrics. They were not to eat the fruit of newly bearing trees. (Reference here could be to an agricultural principle that allowed the trees eventually to produce more fruit, or reference could be that the first produce of the tree was inferior, and thus not acceptable as an offering to the Lord). They were not to eat blood, or cut off the flesh of the dead (cannibalism). They were not to give their daughters

into prostitution, or be involved in crooked business dealings. They were to respect their elders, and love their neighbors and strangers as themselves. All these laws were necessary in order that each person be a part of society as a whole. If any of these laws were violated, relationships with one's neighbor would be either harmed or destroyed. By following these principles of moral behavior and ethics, one could live peacefully in the society of Israel. When the principles were practiced as a whole, then the nations around Israel would perceive that the laws of the society were given by God and not determined by the desires of fallible men. ***Out of the land of Egypt:*** Because God had taken Israel out of Egyptian bondage, the Israelites were obligated to keep His commandments. Their freedom came with responsibility. In order to retain their freedom, they had to remain within the limits of His will. Since there is no real freedom without law, Israel, through obedience, had to learn that unless they kept the law of God, they would bring themselves into the bondage of their own misguided beliefs.

Chapter 20
LAWS CONCERNING PUNISHMENT

20:1-5 Because we are several centuries removed from the religious culture of Molech, we do not understand everything that surrounded the worship of this god that was conceived after the imagination of misguided religionists (See 2 Kg 23:10). It was spiritual adultery for any Israelite to give his children to the worship of such cults. God was serious about this matter in that He commanded the Israelites to stone to death any of their number who would involve themselves in such a cult. The public stoning was to be a public warning.

20:6-8 Efforts to receive help in this world from a supposed world of spirits and demons was considered by God a deviation from His sovereignty. The condemnation of occultism in Israel was not evidence that the spirits that were believed by the cults existed and that they influenced the living. The prohibition against practicing such occult matters only affirmed that God made our minds very creative. We have the creative mentality to conjure up all sorts of fictitious spirit nonsense in our efforts to stray from the sovereignty of God in our lives. Men who have little knowledge of the word of God will create supposed supernatural beings from which they run in fear. In all biblical exhortations to stay away from occult beliefs and practices, there is a warning by God to stay close to Him by meditating on His word day and night.

20:9-21 The penalty for cursing one's parents was death by stoning (See Ex 21:17). We assume that the rebellious child that cursed either mother or father was of the age of accountability, and thus responsible for his actions against his parents. ***Adultery:*** The practice of illicit sex was punishable by death (18:6-20,22,23). Sexual acts that were prohibited were sexual relations with another man's wife, one's father's wife (a stepmother), his own daughter-in-law, a person of the same sex (homosexuality), an animal (bestiality), a mother and her daughter, a sister or half sister, a menstruate woman, an aunt, an uncle's wife, and a brother's wife. ***They will be childless:*** Reference is probably to one's death before he is able to have children of his own. If this statement is taken in the context of rebellious youth who would curse their mother and father, then reference would be to those who are not yet married, but are living a riotous life in rebellion to God.

20:22-26 See 18:24-30. As in chapter 18, the condition for Israel's remaining in the land was their obedience to the law of God. If they were disobedient, then there would be no reason why they should enjoy the privilege of a land wherein they were to be morally preserved for the coming of the Messiah. Obedience was the condition for keeping the land.

Holiness In Priests & Holy Seasons
(21:1 – 25:55)

Outline: (1) Regulations for the priests (21:1 – 22:33), (2) Regulations for holy days and seasons (23:1-44), (3) The lampstand and showbread (24:1-9), (4) Punishment for blasphemy (24:10-23), (5) The sabbatical year and Jubilee (25:1-55)

Chapter 21
REGULATIONS FOR THE PRIESTS

21:1-24 Since the priests stood between God and the people, they were to be holy and separated from the world for the purpose of performing their duties. Except for the death of relatives, they were to keep themselves from contact with the dead. ***Wife:*** The wives of the priests must also be holy before God. A priest could not marry a harlot. The daughter of a priest was to be put to death if she were guilty of harlotry. ***High priest:*** The regulations concerning the high priest were more strict than those regulations that applied to the rest of the priests. He was not to uncover his head or tear his clothes in the act of mourning. Since he was the symbol of the highest purity of Israel, he was to marry only a daughter of Israel who was a virgin. ***Go out of the sanctuary:*** It was not that he could not leave the tent of meeting, but that he should not go out of the tent for mourning. His primary place of work was the tabernacle. ***Blemish:*** As the sacrificial animals were to be without blemish, so also was the priest to be without blemish. Only the most pure and perfect were to be representatives before God. This regulation probably referred only to the high priest since reference is made to barring the priests from approaching the veil and altar. ***Unclean:*** When a priest was unclean, he could not touch any holy thing (See 22:1-9). ***Sanctify them:*** It was the Lord who set the priests apart as a special people to minister to the religious needs of the people.

Chapter 22

22:1-16 The entire family of the priest had a right to share in the offerings that were brought before the Lord. However, a stranger, sojourner, or hired servant could not eat at the priest's table. A priest's daughter who was a widow or was divorced could also participate with the offerings. A legal bondservant could have a part in the priest's table. If a daughter of a priest was married to another man, the husband's family could not eat at the priest's table. The importance of these regulations was in the fact that the holiness of the priest must be protected since he was the official representative that stood before God on behalf of the people of Israel.

22:17-33 God did not want the people bringing as an of-

fering that which they did not want themselves. That which was to be offered was to be the best of the flock. An important point is made here in reference to contributions. That which was without blemish would be breeding stock among their herds. The offering, therefore, would touch their livelihood. A true sacrifice would be made in order to make the offering. God does not want the donations of those things that one does not want. He wants what we want, and thus the sacrifice is acceptable. We cannot come to the Lord without a sacrifice, without something for which we have given a great deal of time. The very nature of the definition of the word "sacrifice" means that it costs us something.

Chapter 23
REGULATIONS FOR HOLY DAYS & SEASONS

23:1,2 ***Holy convocation:*** The Hebrew word here means "appointed time." These were the appointed times of the feast when the people were to appear before God. There were three annual feasts to which the people were to go. These were times of holiday, joy and celebration.

23:3 ***The Sabbath:*** The Sabbath was not one of the celebration feasts, but was kept as a sign of the covenant between Israel and God (Ex 20:8-11; 31:12-17). The keeping of the Sabbath was a sign that signaled to the rest of the world that Israel was in a covenant with their God. The fact that the Sabbath was a sign indicates that since the time of creation no other people kept the Sabbath as a special day (Gn 2:1-3). If Israel were keeping the Sabbath before this day, then there would have been no significance in their keeping it after this day as a sign of the covenant. The sign of the Sabbath was in the fact that they started keeping it at Mt. Sinai while no other nation kept it. On this day, the Sabbath, Israel was to cease from all work. While the nations around Israel worked on the Sabbath, the Israelites meditated in rest in remembrance of their covenant that they had with God.

23:4-8 ***The Passover:*** The first of the celebration feasts was the feast of unleavened bread and the Passover. This was independence day for the Israelites. On this day they were to celebrate their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. This was the most important of all of Israel's feasts. For Christians, this feast has significance in that Jesus is our Passover Lamb. As Israel was redeemed from Egyptian captivity, so the Christian has been redeemed from sin by the sacrificial Passover Lamb of God. When Christians remember their redemption by the Lamb, therefore, it is a time of celebration for their deliverance from the bondage of sin.

23:9-14 ***The firstfruits:*** This was the first of four specific laws that God gave Israel that they were to keep when they came into the land of promise (See also 14:34; 19:23; 25:2). This law is in reference to the first cuttings of the harvest. The first fruits signified the fact that all nourishment came from God, and thus the offering of the firstfruits was a thanksgiving to God for His provision. The firstfruits also indicated the rest of the harvest to come which was a blessing from God. Throughout the New Testament, there is a great deal of metaphorical reference to the firstfruit offering (See Rm 8:23; 11:16; 16:5; 1 Co 15:20,23; 16:15).

23:15-22 ***The feast of weeks:*** This is the feast of harvest. The feast of firstfruits was at the beginning of the harvest and this feast came at the end. It was a feast to celebrate the grace of God in providing the harvest. ***The very corners:*** It would only be natural to remember the poor after a harvest. Therefore, during the harvest they were to leave the grain standing in the corners of the fields for the poor and sojourners. It is noteworthy that if the poor were to receive food, they also had to work for it. It was not given to them without labor. They had to also work in harvest for their food.

23:23-25 The feast of trumpets was a sabbath rest in that no work was to be done on this first day of the seventh month. The blowing of the trumpets marked the month in which the day of atonement took place and also the celebration of the feast of tabernacles.

23:26-32 In chapter 16 emphasis was placed on the duties of the high priest on the day of atonement (16:29-34). Here emphasis is placed on what the people must do on the day of atonement. ***Afflict your souls:*** This was not a day of celebration, but a serious day in which the people were to consider their sin. The following feast of tabernacles was the most joyous feast. The order of these two feasts teaches that celebration comes after repentance over sin, and God's atonement for our sin. This is indicative of the Lord's Supper for the Christian. Atonement was made at the cross, and the eating of the Supper is to be a time of celebration for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. The atonement has taken place. It is now time for celebration.

23:33-44 ***The feast of tabernacles:*** As the Passover and feast of unleavened bread, this feast lasted for eight days (See Nm 29:12-38; Dt 16:13-15; 31:10-13; Er 3:4; Ne 8:18). ***Solemn assembly:*** There was to be no work during this feast. It was a time of offering sacrifices in feasts to the Lord. This feast celebrated the end of the agricultural year when all the fruits of the harvest had been gathered into storage. The feast, therefore, was meant to manifest gratitude to God for all His blessings. ***Booths:*** One of the practices during this feast was that they made dwellings from bush branches in order to commemorate their wandering in the wilderness. Though at this time they had wandered only two months from the time of their freedom from Egypt to the foot of Sinai, they would spend another forty years in the wilderness because of their sin. However, during all this time God provided for them, and thus during this feast they were to remember the continual care of God for their physical needs. They must remember that God will take care of them if they will remain faithful to Him.

Chapter 24
THE LAMPSTAND & SHOWBREAD

24:1-4 ***Candlestick:*** This was the lampstand of seven bowls that gave light for the tabernacle (Ex 25:31-40; 27:20,21). It was always to be burning, indicating that the work of God on behalf of the people never ceased. The vision of Zechariah 4 would indicate that the perpetual burning of the lampstand was symbolic of Israel's continual priesthood before the nations (Compare Rv 1:12-20).

24:5-9 See Ex 25:23-30. The purpose for the showbread was nourishment for the priest while functioning within the

tabernacle. Placed on the showbread was frankincense that signified it to be a memorial before the Lord for His provision for all men.

PUNISHMENT FOR BLASPHEMY

24:10-23 In order to emphasize the seriousness of obedience to the will of God, this event was inserted. ***Blasphemed:*** This son was evidently still influenced by the false gods of his father who was an Egyptian (See Ex 12:38). Since this was probably the first time this type of incident had happened, the man was remanded in custody until Moses could go before the Lord for advice. The Lord responded that any verbal sin against God and His laws for Israel, who were in this case a people in a covenant relationship with God, was punishable by stoning. Reverence for God is the foundation upon which our beliefs stand. Our values and behavior are a reflection of our beliefs. Disrespect for God and His word, therefore, are the foundation upon which the name of God is blasphemed before the community. ***Stone him:*** The seriousness of the punishment illustrated the seriousness of the sin. The punishment applied to both Israelite and alien. ***Eye for an eye:*** This principle is mentioned in this context in order to establish the law for punishment of both Israelite and alien. It is a law of public justice, not the justification for personal retaliation and revenge. One must not misunderstand Jesus' reference to this law in the Sermon on the Mt. (Mt 5:38-42). What Jesus was condemning was the Pharisees' misapplication of the principle of this law. They were using the principle as a justification for personal revenge. They misunderstood the principle of the law. That principle is that there is a punishment for the violation of law, and the punishment must match the crime. In other words, the death penalty would not be given for one who told a lie. The principle of the law would be that the death penalty would be given to those who voluntarily murdered another person. If one voluntarily took the life of another, he had his right to life taken from him.

Chapter 25

THE SABBATICAL YEAR & JUBILEE

25:1-7 ***Six years:*** After six years of sowing the fields, the seventh was a year of rest (See Ex 23:10,11; Dt 31:10; 2 Kg 10:29; Ne 10:31). That which grew in the fields on its own could be harvested. Not only is there religious significance to the principle, but there is also a practical reason for the law. The land would produce better if it were given a year of rest. During the year of rest, the bacteria of undisturbed soil could do its work in breaking down the organic material of the soil in order to produce a better crop once planting resumed. The Israelite farmers did not understand the work of bacteria, and thus they would reap the benefits of their obedience to the will of God.

25:8-34 ***Jubilee:*** This was a year of rejoicing. Every man's possession was to be returned to him. If one had given himself into the bondage of another because of debt, he was to be set free. ***Years of the fruits:*** The land was to be valued before the year of Jubilee according to the crops that it would produce, not according to any inflationary value or location in reference to a city. ***The land is Mine:*** The original owner of the land was God because He had given it to the Israelites. He entrusted portions to each family, who then took stewardship of the partials allotted to them. If for some reason the land had to be sold to cover debt, then during the year of Jubilee it was to be restored to the family to whom God had given it. The purpose of the year of Jubilee was to emphasize the principle that the land could never be sold permanently. The returning of the land to the original owners also prevented individuals from becoming owners of vast portions of land, and thus bringing into poverty the majority of the nation. ***House in a walled city:*** A different law applied to possessions within the city walls. If the house was sold, the original owner had one year to buy it back. If he did not, then it remained with the new owner indefinitely. ***Levites:*** A house that was sold by the Levites could be redeemed at any time. There was no one-year restriction placed on the Levites for buying back their houses within the walled cities. However, during the year of Jubilee the house would be returned to the Levite who had sold it. ***May not be sold:*** The fields of the Levites that were attached to the cities could not be sold.

25:35-55 ***Poor:*** The year of Jubilee was also a time for the release of those who had given themselves into the servitude of another. In reference to the poor, under the law of God the community of Israel was to help in aiding the survival of the poor. When money was given in loan to the poor, no interest (usury) was to be charged. When food was given, no excess food was to be returned for gain. ***Brought ... out of ... Egypt:*** Israel was poor in Egypt, but was brought out of bondage and given the land of milk and honey. In reference to the poor, therefore, Israel was to do as God had done for them. ***Not ... as a bondservant:*** When a fellow Hebrew had to give himself to the service of another because of debt, the one to whom he gave himself could not treat him as a slave. He was to be considered a hired servant until the year of Jubilee. In the year of Jubilee he was released from his debt, and thus released from the one to whom he had given himself as a servant. ***Possession:*** Because the Israelites had been redeemed by God out of Egyptian bondage, they were His possession. The laws given in this section assume God's ownership of the Israelites. Therefore, they were not to be possessed by one another in reference to debt. They could not take possession of one another as slaves as the nations around them took slaves for possession and considered them property. Two fundamental principles that are behind all the laws that were given to Israel are the principles for respecting human life and the freedom of the individual.

Priestly Holiness, Obedience & Vows
(26:1 – 27:34)

Outline: (1) Blessings for obedience (26:1-13), (2) Punishment for disobedience (26:14-39), (3) Affirmation of God's faithfulness (26:40-46), (4) Vows and tithes (27:1-34)

Chapter 26

BLESSINGS FOR OBEDIENCE

26:1-13 As with the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, Leviticus ends with exhortations to be obedient to the law of

God (See Ex 23:20-33; Dt 28:1-68). ***Idols:*** In order to be obedient to the laws of God, one must not create in his mind a concept of how God should behave. The spirit of idolatry is in the heart of those who seek to rebel against the will of God. Once one has conceived his god, he then forms an idol or image to remind him of his god, or to add concrete existence to his god. Idolatry always leads one away from God. It is fitting, therefore, that a book that was written to instruct the religious leaders of God's people should end with an exhortation that the religious leaders, the priests, guard the people against creating gods after their own imagination. ***Rain ... peace:*** If Israel continued to be obedient to the will of God, God would bless them in the land. If the people remained faithful, they would eat food from old storage, clear the storage bin, and then prepare storage for the future. Faithfulness gives one hope for the future, and society must have hope. Without hope there is no encouragement in the present to prepare for the future. Israel had come out of the land of Egypt wherein it was assumed that the gods had protected the people. In this context, however, God wanted Israel to understand that it would be the only true and living God who will supply all their needs. Through their own ingenuity they would not be able to stay in the land. Only through the blessing of God would they be able to produce and remain in the land.

PUNISHMENT FOR DISOBEDIENCE

26:14-39 The condition for Israel's remaining in the promised land was their continued obedience of the will of God. One could not assume God's blessing when at the same time there is a refusal to be obedient to the will of God. ***If:*** Throughout this context there is a series of "ifs" which places conditions on Israel's remaining in the land. If they did not keep the will of God, there would first come chastening, then judgments, and finally destruction or severance from the land. Their disobedience would lead them through a series of afflictions: sicknesses (16), famines (16,26), wars and oppression by their enemies (17), plagues (21), pestilence (25), devastation (30-33), and finally the terror of their enemies and captivity (33).

AFFIRMATION OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

26:40-46 ***Confess ... are humbled:*** If the afflictions God would bring on them for their disobedience to His will produced confession of their sins and humility before God, then there would be restoration. Confession and humility cause one to remember the will of God and His covenant. A remorseful heart will subsequently repent and return to obedience of the conditions that were established by God to maintain the covenant.

Chapter 27
VOWS & TITHES

27:1-15 ***A special vow:*** Outside the requirements of the law one could place himself under "law," that is, under a vow to make an offering to the Lord. Hannah placed herself under her own law (vow) by making a commitment that if God gave her a son, then she would give the son to the Lord (1 Sm 1:11; see also Jg 11:30,31). This would be a vow offering, and thus a binding obligation that one would place upon himself. Making vows to give offerings to the Lord, therefore, was very serious (See Dt 23:21-23). ***Valuation:*** This was the worth of the thing that was promised to God. The valuation of the thing was according to sex and age. In reference to possessions, the value was determined in reference to the year of Jubilee. ***Poor:*** As with other laws, there was always consideration for the poor. In the case of making a valuation of that which was promised to the Lord, the priest had the final say in determining the worth of something in reference to the poor. ***Animal:*** If an animal had been promised in a vow, then there could be no substitution of money for the animal. The animal had to be offered. Making a vow offering of an animal meant that the animal had become holy. If the animal that was given in a vow to be offered was unclean, then the priest could place a valuation on it and have it sold. If the owner wanted to redeem the animal, then he could for the price of the valuation, plus one fifth the value of the animal. The same rule applied to houses that were offered to the Lord.

27:16-25 ***A field:*** Laws concerning land varied, depending on whether the land was inherited or had been purchased. Land was valuated according to the amount of seed that was necessary to sow it. The valuation was made in reference to the time before the year of Jubilee. Inherited land could be bought back for the value of the land, plus one fifth the value. ***Devoted:*** If the land was not bought back, then it became the permanent property of the priests. ***Not of his possession:*** If one dedicated property that he had bought, then after the valuation, this land could go back to the original owner during the Jubilee, but only if the valuation was paid to the priests for the land.

27:26-34 ***Firstborn of the animals:*** The firstborn could not be given to the Lord since they were already His (Ex 13:2; 34:19). The firstborn of unclean animals, however, could be valued and redeemed for the valuation, plus one fifth. If it was not bought back, it had to be sold since the priest could not possess an unclean animal. ***Devoted thing:*** When something was devoted to God, it could not be sold. It was something that was totally given to God and could not be redeemed. The devoted thing was destroyed from among men in the sense that men could not use it for themselves. ***Tithe:*** A tithe of the land, the herd, or the flock could be redeemed if the valuation, plus one fifth, was paid. ***Passes under the rod:*** This was the action of the shepherd giving the tithe of the animals that passed under his staff. Every tenth animal that passed under his staff was to be given in tithe. He could not be selective by choosing either good or bad animals.

The principle concerning those things that were given to the Lord was that the giver could not benefit from his contribution. Giving of things where the giver enjoyed the result of the gift was not considered a contribution. Giving an offering to the Lord meant that the giver released himself from all use of the gift, plus any benefits that the gift might generate. In other words, one could not give his house to the Lord, and yet remain in it. He could not give a field, and yet use the field for his own profit. Giving an offering to the Lord was sacrificial, and thus one relinquished his right of control over that which was given. In this way, the sacrifice was worship to God. In worship, one must come to God with an offering.

Numbers

WRITER

Moses is the undisputed writer who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to inscribe the words of this book (See intro. to Gn). The phrase, *"The Lord spoke to Moses"* is used over 40 times in the book to introduce chapters and sections of divine instruction for the nation of Israel.

Because this book explains much of the work of Moses on behalf of Israel, it is sometimes referred to by scholars as the "Book of Moses." Moses is pictured in the book as the lawgiver, counselor, provider, intercessor, peacemaker, religious and civil leader, and the servant of God on behalf of Israel. The focus of the book is God working through Moses in order to lead His people to the promised land.

The key verse of the book would be 10:29: *"We are journeying to the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us and we will do good to you. For the LORD has spoken good concerning Israel."*

Numbers is a record of the many times the Israelites complained about their predicament throughout their wanderings from Egypt to Canaan. They had forgotten the suffering of their Egyptian bondage, but not the fine things they enjoyed in Egypt. When in times of struggles, the mind often forgets past struggles by focusing on the good times of the past. This natural forgetfulness of the struggles they had in Egypt made it possible for the Israelites to murmur concerning their predicament in the wilderness. Their complaints digressed from complaining against Moses to complaining directly against God. The results of their attitude of complaint was that they were condemned to forty years of wandering in the wilderness, wherein all who were twenty years of age and over at the time of the exodus from Egypt were not allowed to enter the promised land. We would assume, therefore, that this record of their complaints, and subsequent punishments by God, was written in order to remind the generations of Israel to trust in God by forsaking their culture of complaining. Their trust would be revealed by their lack of complaining.

BOOK

The first numbering (census) of Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai was made in order to establish and organize the tribal families for an income for the Levitical priesthood (Ex 30:11-16). Recorded in this book is another census that was taken before Israel left Sinai in order to determine the military personnel of the nation (chs 1-4). Immediately before Israel entered the land of Canaan, a third census was taken (See ch 26). Because of the numbering of Israel upon which focus is made in this book, Bible students have assigned the book with the title, "Numbers."

"Numbers" is the traditional name of the book. We take this name from the name that was assigned to it by Jerome in the Latin Vulgate (*Numeri*). However, Jerome took the name from the Septuagint. The Hebrew name for the book is *B'midbar*, which means "in the wilderness" since the book covers Israel's history from Mt. Sinai to the time of their entrance into Canaan.

The book continues the history of Israel that was concluded with the book of Exodus. In order to understand Numbers, therefore, one must have a good understanding of history that is revealed through both Genesis and Exodus, for the book of Numbers adds a vital link in Israel's history from the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt to the time of the nation's entrance into and settlement in the land of promise.

DATE

The events of the book occurred about eleven months after the Israelites arrived at the foot of Mt. Sinai. If we accept the date of the exodus from Egypt to be around 1,445 B.C., then Numbers was probably written sometime around 1,400 B.C. However, a later date has also been proposed. Some Bible historians have felt that the best evidences establish the time for the exodus from Egypt to be around 1,300 B.C. There are various reasons for this date. The Hyksos Dynasty, a dynasty of Pharaohs who were not Egyptian, probably existed previous to 1,300 B.C., and thus this dynasty was in existence when Joseph, who was also not an Egyptian, was a ruler in Egypt. He would have been allowed to be a great ruler in Egypt during the Hyksos Dynasty, whereas during the dynasties of the Egyptian-born Pharaohs he would not have been allowed to rule in Egypt. There is also archaeological evidence that many cities suddenly appeared in the land of Canaan during the time follow-

ing 1,300 B.C., which cities could have been built by the newly settled Israelites in the land.

The book was probably written a short time before Israel entered Canaan. It thus covers a period of about 39 years that started with Israel's leaving Mt. Sinai, wandering in the wilderness, and to the time they prepared to enter Canaan.

Preparation To Leave Mt. Sinai
(1:1 – 9:23)

Outline: (1) The first census of Israel (1:1 – 2:34), (2) Support for the Levites (3:1 – 4:49), (3) The purity of society (5:1-31), (4) The Nazarite vow (6:1-21), (5) Benediction on the Israelites (6:22-27), (6) Offerings by the princes of Israel (7:1-89), (7) Cleansing of the Levites (8:1-26), (8) Movement of the camp (9:1-23)

Chapter 1
THE FIRST CENSUS OF ISRAEL

1:1-3 ***Take a census:*** Various reasons have been given for the numbering of the nation. Some have felt that the numbering at this time in the history of Israel was for the purpose of emphasizing for later generations God's promise that He would multiply the nation as was promised to Abraham. Another purpose for the numbering of those over the age of twenty would have been a record that, except for Joshua and Caleb, no one over this age entered the promised land because of their sin in refusing to enter Canaan immediately upon God's instructions. ***Every male:*** Since the census was of the males only, then we would assume that this census was for military purposes in order to determine how many men were in Israel who could go to war.

1:4-19 The numbering was conducted according to the heads of the tribes, families and households of Israel. The number according to the families made it possible for future generations to trace back to these families those who came out of Egyptian captivity.

1:20-46 Only those men who were 20 years of age and older were to be counted. The total number from this census was 603,550 men of war. Later in chapter 26 the census would reveal that there were 601,730. By figuring according to this number of men in Israel, Bible students have estimated that the population of Israel at this time in history, including women and children, to be anywhere from two million to a maximum of three million.

1:47-54 The Levites were excluded from the numbering of men for war. God had earlier separated them for spiritual service to the nation. Their primary work was to maintain the tabernacle and the sacrificial services for the people. The Levites were thus subject to a different census because they were not to receive a possession in the land (See 3:1 – 4:49).

Chapter 2

2:1-34 Described in this chapter is the organization of the tribes of Israel in reference to the movement and setting up of the tabernacle. The center of reference for the settlement of the people was the tabernacle. The reason for the location of each tribe according to the setting of the tabernacle was for the purpose of contact and communication. People could be located and a plan for marching with the tabernacle could be carried out in an orderly manner. The moving and setting up of the tabernacle was as a moving city. Since the tabernacle was situated where it was the center of the settlement, every tribe had frontal property that was connected to the tabernacle. The settlement of the people in reference to the tabernacle symbolically connected all tribes together as one nation with their focus on the presence of God. When the tabernacle was moved among the possessions, no one tribe could claim ownership of the tabernacle, and thus unity was to prevail among the tribes.

Chapter 3
SUPPORT FOR THE LEVITES

3:1-4 Kohath was probably a cousin of Moses. The Kohathites served in taking care of the ark and ceremonial utensils. But the sons of Aaron, Moses' brother, were specifically consecrated to the Lord as the high priests. From Aaron priests were to come to minister the services of the tabernacle, whereas the Kohathites were to be responsible for the transportation of the ark and ceremonial utensils. ***Nadab and Abihu:*** These two sons of Aaron sinned against the Lord, and subsequently were struck dead (See comments Lv 10:1,2). Some have speculated that the sons of Levi helped in their duties as priests with the sons of Aaron (See Jg 17:5,10,13).

3:5-13 ***Tribe of Levi:*** It is apparent that those of the tribe of Levi were assistants to the sons of Aaron. It was at this time that the tribe of Levi was separated from the other tribes of Israel in order to minister to the spiritual needs of the nation. Those of the tribe of Levi thus functioned full-time on behalf of Israel. ***Alien ... put to death:*** No unauthorized or unclean person was allowed to function in the capacity for which the sons of Levi were to perform. If someone other than a Levite attempted to function as a priest, that person was to be put to death. ***I have taken the Levites:*** God had hallowed the firstborn of Israel at the time of the exodus from Egypt (See Ex 13:2,11,12). In this context He hallowed the sons of Levi with all their livestock. Instead of taking all the firstborn of Israel, He took only the sons of Levi.

3:14-39 The census included numbering all the male children who were over one month old. It also included numbering the children between the ages of 30 and 50. Those between 30 and 50 would care for the tabernacle under the supervision of the sons of Aaron. The numbering included the Gershonites, Kohathites, Merarites, with Moses and Aaron. The total number of males one month and older was 22,000. The total number that is given in verse 39 does not include an additional 300. The 300 were possibly the firstborn of the Levites, and thus did not need to be counted with the total number since they were already consecrated to the Lord. The total number of the males between 30 and 50 was 8,580 (4:48). We must keep in mind that when analyzing these numbers we cannot be

meticulous in the final figures. The final tally was meant to be a figure from which to begin the services of the tabernacle with reference to the total population of Israel.

3:40-51 There was a difference of 273 between the final tally of the firstborn and the total of the tribe of Levi. In order to make up this difference there was a plan of redemption (payment). Instead of the firstborn of all the nation being given for service to the Lord, an offering of five shekels was given for each one. This amount was possibly taken from the tribal treasuries and given to the priests.

Chapter 4

4:1-20 ***Sons of Kohath:*** The Kohathites, as well as the Gershonites and Merarites, were given specific duties in reference to the tabernacle. The Kohathites were given the duty of taking care of the utensils of worship (the table, the vessels, the altars, and all the service pieces). They were to function under the direction of Eleazar, the priest (3:32). Since they were under more strict regulations than either the Gershonites and Merarites, they had the greater responsibility in their service to the tabernacle. With their more significant work came greater responsibility.

4:21-28 ***Sons of Gershon:*** The sons of Gershon had the responsibility of the tent structure which included the curtains and draperies (See 3:25,26).

4:29-33 ***Sons of Merari:*** The sons of Merari were responsible for the boards, bars, pillars, sockets, and the solid parts of the curtains (3:36,37). They were to carry out their responsibilities under the supervision of the priest, Ithamar, who had the responsibility of organizing the construction of the tent of meeting (Ex 38:21).

4:34-49 ***Thirty ... fifty:*** The age at which one was to assume his priestly responsibilities was 30. This provides some commentary on why Jesus began His earthly ministry at about 30 (Lk 3:23). At the age of 50, the sons of Levi and the priests could retire from their responsibilities of serving the people in their God-ordained duties. Their service was from 30 to 50, after which they could live in their own dwellings for the rest of their lives.

Chapter 5
THE PURITY OF SOCIETY

5:1-4 If the total count of the Israelites was around three million at the time they were at the foot of Mt. Sinai, then there would be some social and cleanliness issues for such a large group of people in one place in the wilderness. There would be challenges of cleanliness, honesty and morality for the society of Israel as they dwelt in the wilderness on their way to Canaan. In reference to cleanliness, they would have a problem with sanitation when camped in close proximity to one another, though while in the wilderness, the tribes probably camped at a greater distance from one another than we might suppose. Just prior to their entrance into the land of Canaan, 20:1 seems to indicate that after 38 years there was a coming together of the tribes from their disbursed locations in the wilderness in order to make final plans to enter Canaan. Behind the laws concerning contact with the dead and lepers, there were certainly connotations concerning health and sanitation. Though three specific cases of uncleanliness are mentioned (leprosy, discharges from infection, and contact with a dead body), the general instructions in reference to any of these cases would be applicable to any disease (See Lv 13:3; 15:2; 21:1). ***Outside the camp:*** In order to prevent epidemics, the instruction would be isolation outside the camp of the people. Though the people did not understand the contamination that would come from viruses and germs that would be spread from one person to another, quarantine was the precaution given when symptoms of disease were seen. God wanted His people to behave after a manner of cleanliness because they were a holy people. Cleanliness and holiness were connected in the sense that if one violated the laws concerning cleanliness, he would be violating the law of God, and thus be unholy before God. The laws concerning cleanliness were from God, as well as all moral laws. Violation of any law from God was a violation of the whole law of God.

5:5-10 ***Make restitution:*** The second sin that is emphasized in this chapter in reference to the social structure of Israel, is in reference to honesty. The principle that one's property be secure within a society must be maintained in order that citizens of the society dwell in peace with one another. If something was stolen, twenty percent was to be added to the value of that which was stolen with the restitution of that which was stolen. In the matter of righting the wrong that was done, repentance was required and manifested through the action of restitution. The wrong was to be righted by the action of the restitution. After the restitution was made, there was to be reconciliation with God by the man who made the restitution. This was accomplished by the offering of a ram for atonement.

5:11-31 ***Any ... wife ... commits a trespass:*** The third challenge to maintain order in the camp of Israel's society was in reference to morality. The matter here discussed would not be adultery, for which the death penalty was given (Lv 20:10). The matter here would be when a wife's conduct would spark suspicion of infidelity which could not be proved. If the husband were suspicious of his wife's behavior, he could take her before the priest for judgment. Since there is no example of this law being carried out in Scripture, the giving of the law greatly prevented the problem. It was a law that was certainly meant for the time Israel was wandering in the wilderness. The principle of the law was that no wife should act in a flirtatious manner with anyone other than her husband. If she did, then she could be taken before the priest for judgment. The desire of married women, therefore, must be totally to their husbands lest they give the impression that they are seeking affection outside their marriage union. Marital fidelity is the foundation of any society, and thus it must never be compromised by the illicit behavior of either the husband or wife. ***Holy water ... dust:*** The embarrassment and humiliation of going through such a trial to determine the judgment of the woman's innocence certainly encouraged the wives not to involve themselves in any flirtatious behavior with men other than their husbands. If the woman was guilty of infidelity, the drinking of the bitter water would cause serious reactions in

her female organs. However, if she was innocent, the bitter water would cause her to bear children.

Chapter 6
THE NAZARITE VOW

6:1-8 The vow of a Nazarite could be taken by anyone of Israel, both men and women. The Hebrew word for "Nazarite" (*nazir*) means "to separate." By taking the vow one was separating himself or herself for a specific cause for the Lord. ***Drink no ... strong drink:*** The Nazarite was to drink nothing that would be intoxicating. Vinegar was made by the Hebrews in a manner that it would intoxicate, and thus was prohibited for the Nazarite. The Nazarite was essentially prohibited from eating or drinking anything that was produced from the grapevine. ***No razor:*** Not cutting of one's hair was an outward symbol of having taken the Nazarite vow. The outward symbol of the vow was necessary in order that others not offer the Nazarite something that would contradict his vow. ***He will not come near a dead body:*** Lest he become unclean, the Nazarite was not even to help in the burial of his own family members. He was to be a person separated for the Lord, and thus committed to the Lord's service.

6:9-12 Since the Nazarite was human, he could inadvertently violate his vow. For this reason, atonement could be made by shaving his head. He would then bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest for an offering.

6:13-21 ***The days:*** The Nazarite vow was for a specific period of time. The vow was for no less than one year. At the end of the vow the Nazarite would bring offerings before the priest in order to conclude the time of the vow. Once the priest performed the appropriate ceremonies to conclude the vow, the head was shaved in order to reveal to the public that the individual had concluded the time of the vow.

BENEDICTION ON THE ISRAELITES

6:22-27 This blessing of the priest was a benediction for blessing a consecrated people. By exalting the character of God before the people, the people were encouraged to live holy lives before God who was holy. The blessing was meant to inspire the people to behave according to the will of God. The blessing reassured the people (See Ps 91; Jn 17:9-15; 1 Th 5:23), reminded them that God's favor was with them (See Ps 21:6; 34:15), gave them assurance of God's peace (See Jn 14:26-27), and gave them confidence in that God had claimed His people by putting His name on them (See Jn 14:26,27). They could thus go forth with the confidence that God was with them. As long as they stayed close to the commandments of God, God would stay close to them. But if they forsook the commandments, they would be forsaken (Hs 4:6).

Chapter 7
OFFERINGS BY THE PRINCES OF ISRAEL

7:1-9 ***Wagon ... oxen:*** The tabernacle was constructed for constant movement throughout the wanderings of Israel. The sons of Merari and Gershon were thus provided with wagons and oxen in order to transport the furnishings and structure of the tabernacle throughout the wilderness wanderings. The sons of Kohath had the responsibility of transporting the ark and sacred utensils of the ceremonies surrounding the offerings. Provisions were also made in order to transport the tabernacle from one region to another when Israel eventually came into the land of promise.

7:10-89 The offering of each prince was the same. The offering was one silver plate, one silver basin, and one gold dish. Each brought a grain offering, burnt offering, sin offering, and a peace offering. Other than the burnt offering, the offerings were for a meal of celebration for the dedication of the tabernacle. All the offerings were in the context of dedicating the tabernacle for its use. This onetime event would dedicate the tabernacle for centuries to come. There would never again be such a dedication for the tabernacle. We would assume, therefore, that the tabernacle was to be God's center for religious reference for Israel throughout their history in the land of Palestine. The temple of Jerusalem came about 400 years later in the history of Israel when men desired to have a building in the midst of Palestine that represented their center of spiritual connection with God. The implications from this context of the dedication of the tabernacle, however, would indicate that God intended that the tabernacle alone be God's symbol among the people that He was in their midst. The problem with the temple that came later, was that it was situated in one location, and thus could not be moved around from one tribal possession to another as the tabernacle. Jerusalem, therefore, became a unique city in Israel. However, in these original laws in reference to the tabernacle it was not in the mind of God. In fact, when these laws were given, Jebus (later, Jerusalem) was only an insignificant settlement in the land of Canaan. God only allowed the temple, and the city of Jerusalem, to become the center of Jewish religious emphasis because of the desires of men who followed the temple worship of the nations around them. We must never underestimate man's desire to construct a building in which he seeks to place his god and religious service.

Chapter 8
CLEANSING OF THE LEVITES

8:1-4 Light the lamps: This action possibly signified that the priests were ready to offer sacrifices for the people (See Ex 40:4). The significance was at least a signal that the consecration of the tabernacle was finished, and thus, God wanted the people to know of His continuing presence with the people and their opportunity to offer sacrifices.

8:5-19 ***Cleanse them:*** In order to do the holy work of the tabernacle the priests themselves had to be separated from the people for the purpose of spiritual ministry. The instructions here were given as rites of purification in order to set forth the priests as holy workers before God on behalf of the people. There were rites given for the physical cleansing of the priests, as well as the legal purification of their work. ***Put their hands on the Levites:*** We are not told exactly how this was done, but the symbolism is significant. By putting their hands on the Levites, the people were signifying that they would accept the Levites for the uniqueness of their God ordained function among the people. They were also stating that they would

support the Levites as a tribe that was separated from Israel as special priests for the sake of Israel. Though all Israel was a nation of priests, God had ordained that the Levites function within Israel as priests to the nation of priests. Even God's appointed workers must have spiritual help from those whose work it is to encourage the saints. Simply because one is a spiritual leader of the people does not assume that he has no spiritual struggles within his own life.

8:20-26 After the ceremonies of purification, and the peoples' commitment to provide for the Levites, the Levities assumed their function. All Levite males from the ages of 25 to 50 assumed their duties, on behalf of the people, to attend to the tabernacle and the spiritual needs of the people. In 4:3 the age at which the Levite was to start his service is given as 30. The difference between the two ages, 25 and 30, would possibly be answered in the fact that there was a period of five years for apprenticeship before the Levite began his official duties. At least we could conclude that he did not go immediately into the priesthood without a mentor to prepare him.

Chapter 9
MOVEMENT OF THE CAMP

9:1-14 See comments Exodus 12:1-27. Since the Israelites had arrived at the foot of Mt. Sinai over a year before, they had not observed the Passover. God's command that they observe it now was to inaugurate their departure from Sinai. Because of the struggles that they were about to endure, they needed to be reminded of the struggles they went through in captivity and their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. They needed to be reminded continually of their struggles they had in Egypt since in their own struggles in the wilderness they would seek to return to Egypt. Added to the instructions of Exodus 12:1-27 are two more specific commands here in reference to who could keep the Passover. Those who had come into contact with a dead body or had been on a far off journey could keep the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month. There is also given in this context provisions for the alien. Reference here is to the proselyte. This was one who had determined to settle with Israel and accept the religious ceremonies of the law of God. These first instructions to Israel concerning the alien reminded Israel that they were not to be a nation that excluded people from the law of God, but one that included everyone who would desire to be obedient to the law of God. God's laws for Israel were never meant to be laws that would exclude others from coming to God through obedience to His will.

9:15-23 ***Cloud ... fire:*** Since their departure from Egypt, Israel had enjoyed the comfort of God's presence as it was manifested through the pillar of cloud by day and the fire by night (Ex 13:21). They were reassured in this context that the same would stay with them throughout their journey as they set out from Sinai. However, His presence would be manifested through the tabernacle.

Leaving Mt. Sinai
(10:1 – 14:45)

Outline: (1) Movement of the Israelite camp (10:1-36), (2) Complaints of the people (11:1-9), (3) Burden of leadership on Moses (11:10-17), (4) God's promise of food (11:18-23), (5) Giving of the Spirit (11:24-30), (6) Giving of the quail (11:31-35), (7) Sin of Miriam (12:1-16), (8) Surveying the promised land (13:1-33), (9) Negative response of the people (14:1-10), (10) God's judgment of the nation (14:11-45)

Chapter 10
MOVEMENT OF THE ISRAELITE CAMP

10:1-10 ***Calling of the assembly:*** The movement of the camp of Israel was no small challenge. In order to rally the people for movement, Moses was commanded to make trumpets that would be blown to call the attention of the people. These trumpets were to be made of silver, and thus different from the ram's horn trumpets that were used in reference to worship. The sounding of these trumpets signaled that the entire assembly should gather. The sounding of one trumpet called the princes of the tribes together. The continuous sound signaled that the camp should begin its march. The trumpets were also used to call the armies to war and to celebrate certain feast days. The sounding of the trumpets for these purposes was to continue throughout the history of Israel.

10:11-36 ***The cloud was taken up:*** This was the signal that it was time to move. With great anticipation the people surely waited for this day, since they had been at the foot of Mt. Sinai for about a year (See Ex 19:1). ***In the first place:*** The listing of the tribes by their leaders was to set the order of their march throughout the wilderness. ***Hobab:*** Jethro (Reuel), Moses' father-in-law, eventually returned to Midian. Hobab, one of Jethro's sons, however, stayed with the Israelites while they were at Mt. Sinai. But when the Israelites were moving on, Hobab also decided to return to his father's house in Midian. Moses, however, wanted him to go with Israel because of his knowledge of the wilderness areas into which they were going. Though Hobab wanted to return to Midian, it seems that Moses' persistence convinced him to stay with Israel, since his descendants are mentioned to be living in Canaan many years later (See Jg 1:16; 1 Sm 15:6). ***Ark of the covenant:*** The ark was carried before the people (See Ja 3:6). The fact that it was carried before the people symbolized God's leadership of the people and their willingness to follow. ***Rise up, O Lord:*** Moses' prayer was that the enemies of Israel be scattered before their march. As long as Israel was obedient to the will of God, this prayer was answered. When the ark was settled in a specific place, the prayer was that God remain among His people. This He did, but only when they lived according to His commandments. The condition for the answered prayer was the obedience of the people.

Chapter 11
COMPLAINTS OF THE PEOPLE

11:1-3 The complaints of the people are an indication of their difficulty in dealing with the struggles of their present circumstances. The Israelites had learned a culture of complaint while slaves in bondage in Egypt. They continued this complaint culture in their journey to Mt. Sinai (Ex 14:11,12; 15:24,25). And now they were again complaining. The at-

titude of complaint must be replaced by total dependence on God. We would assume that God knew that this culture of complaining had to be taken out of the nation as a whole. Much of it was with the death of those of the age of 20 and over during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings. By the time the nation came to the east of the Jordan River to enter into Palestine, they had been humiliated and humbled by their wilderness exile. There was no complaining after they crossed the Jordan. ***Fire of the Lord:*** The answer to complaint was discipline from the Lord. In this case, the punishment was immediate. The discipline was stopped only when Moses interceded for the people. Moses knew that if the punishment continued, Israel would be totally destroyed. As a leader of the people, therefore, he knew the judgment of God, and thus pled on behalf of the people for their survival from the punishment of God.

11:4-9 ***Meat to eat:*** Their craving for meat reminded them of their life in Egypt. Their appetites for meat, therefore, caused them to forget their struggles in bondage. It seems that they had spoiled themselves with a diet of meat in Egypt, for at this time the manna was not enough (See Ex 16:14-36). The miracle of the presence of the manna was not enough to reassure them that God was taking care of their need for food. One point is at least proved in reference to miracles. Men become accustomed to every evidence of the presence of God, and thus continue to complain in reference to the struggles of life. In this case, the manna miracle did not increase their faith. They still complained. A constant witness of miracles, therefore, is not sufficient to produce a strong faith. Only when one lives in the absence of miracles, and in the midst of struggle, is his faith increased. Miracles initiate faith, but do not sustain or build faith. Great faith can be developed only outside the presence of miracles. Only when walks by faith, not by sight, will his or her faith grow.

BURDEN OF LEADERSHIP ON MOSES

11:10-17 ***The people weep:*** The people were organized in their protest in that every man wept at the door of his tent. The punishment by fire among them did not stop their complaining. ***Afflicted your servant:*** Because of Moses' despair, he thought that he had done something wrong in reference to his leadership of the people. There may be some complaint on the part of Moses for God laying the burden of leading the people on his shoulders. Moses' complaint, therefore, was that he was not able to lead such a people. If he trusted in his own leadership skills, he could not lead the people. God allowed the burden of leadership to weigh heavy on Moses. It was heavy to the point that Moses realized that he must trust in God to carry him through the task of leading the people. God leads His leaders into realizing that they alone cannot lead His people. Only those who trust in the power of God in their lives can effectively lead God's people to where He wants them. ***Kill me:*** Moses' despair was so great that he knew that he could not go on with the complaining of the people. ***Seventy men:*** In order to relieve some of the responsibility of the burden of leadership, God instructed Moses to delegate responsibility to the elders. This had been done before as a result of Jethro's counsel (Ex 18:17-26). However, in this case the emphasis is on the spiritual leadership of the people. Good leadership does not focus the attention of the people exclusively on one person, but on the many who stand up to lead the people. Centralized leadership will always lead to the downfall of the people.

GOD'S PROMISE OF FOOD

11:18-23 ***Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow:*** God would provide the meat through the giving of the quail. However, there is some punishment in the giving of the quail in that the people would initially be overwhelmed by one month's quail in one day. The people could not eat their own flocks and herds which were meant for sacrifices and daily milk. ***Despised the Lord:*** This was the sin of the people, not the complaining. The complaining was only an indication of a greater problem among the people. They followed their lusts for the pleasures of Egypt rather than the will of the Lord. They wanted to trust in the security of their life in Egypt, rather than put their faith in God. ***Lord's hand too short:*** In order to prove that God can care completely for His people, in one day He produced a month's worth of quail for the people. They were overwhelmed by the quail, and thus taught that God's provision for His people is not inadequate. God can care for His people far beyond their dreams.

GIVING OF THE SPIRIT

11:24-30 ***The Spirit rested on them:*** The Holy Spirit came on the elders as He was upon Moses. Their inspired praises of God and prophesying the will of God was a witness to the faithfulness and presence of God. Through this miraculous event the people were encouraged by the presence of God. ***Eldad ... Medad:*** We are not told if these two elders were present at the tabernacle. Regardless of their presence at the tabernacle, the Lord poured out the Spirit on them. Though Joshua recommended that they not be allowed to prophesy, Moses counselled that regardless of where they were, they were to be allowed to do the work of God (Compare Lk 9:49,50). God works in order to include, not exclude those who seek to do His will. ***Would that all ... were prophets:*** In Moses's response to Joshua he affirmed that it would be good that everyone speak the praises of God and teach His will. In this way the work of God would continue to all nations. We see in this act of prophesying that God wanted His prophets not to isolate their work to themselves, but they teach the nations the wonderful works of God.

GIVING OF THE QUAIL

11:31-35 ***Quail from the sea:*** In reference to the location of the camp of Israel, this would have been from the Gulf of Aqaba, or the Red Sea. The quail could easily be caught, so the one who caught the least caught ten homers, or approximately 65 bushels. ***A very great plague:*** That which was to be a blessing, was also a curse. Because of their complaints, the quail was given. However, the quail was given in a manner that resulted in a sickness among the people. As a result, many in the camp died. They thus reaped the result of their sin of desiring the material security of Egypt over trust in the

Lord. When people seek to trust in things of this world, they will reap the consequence of a weak relationship with God. One cannot have a great faith in God when he has a great faith in the things of the world. Faith in God that is based on one's faith in the things of this world is a weak faith.

Chapter 12
SIN OF MIRIAM

12:1-16 ***Miriam ... Aaron:*** It seems that Miriam, the prophetess (Ex 15:20,21), initiated the complaint on this occasion. Aaron, on the other hand, was the follower who succumbed to the presumption of his older sister. They both complained about Moses marrying a foreigner, Zipporah. And more serious, they complained about Moses being the sole leader of the people. Moses had been married to Zipporah for many years by the time this complaint arose, for he married Zipporah sometime during the forty years he was in exile in Sinai (Ex 2:21). In the controversy here among brothers and sister (Miriam, Aaron, and the younger, Moses), God ignored what seemed here to be a racial complaint in reference to Zipporah. God focused on the complaint concerning the challenge of Moses' authority. God considered this very serious, for He knew that this challenge would come again with the rebellion of Korah. ***The Lord spoke suddenly:*** Questioning the authority of God's anointed representative was serious, and thus needed an immediate response. God spoke indirectly to other prophets through visions and dreams, but with Moses He spoke mouth to mouth, face to face. His relationship with Moses was personal. Moses was God's mediator between Himself and the people. Moses became the example of how God would relate to all men personally through the mediatorship of Jesus (See Hb 3:2-6). Under no circumstances, therefore, was Moses' position to be challenged. ***Leprous:*** God's punishment of the instigator of the complaints was immediate. The punishment of Miriam was not only in being stricken with the horrible disease of leprosy, but the social implications of the disease, that she would be driven from social contact with Israel (See Lv 13,14). Her sin was in thinking that she could be elevated to the position and function of Moses, and thus be exalted before the people. But her pride resulted in her humiliation and banishment from the people (See Pv 16:18; Is 10:33). ***Moses ... my lord:*** Upon seeing the sudden affliction of his sister, Aaron's attitude changed immediately in that he addressed his younger brother, Moses, as lord. His recognition of Moses' mediatorship with God was the only thing that would save his sister, Miriam. ***Seven days:*** This period of time was sufficient to chastise one who had sought to question God's anointed authority among the people. We see in the incident that God's authority among His people must not be questioned. Because there was no written word by which this authority could be stated to the people, in this historical case it was revealed directly through Moses. Some thus assumed that Moses made himself who he was. God's authority today is through His word, not man. Because of this incident we know that the authority of His word must not be questioned (Compare Jn 12:48; Gl 1:6-9; Rv 22:18,19). ***Wilderness of Paran:*** This would be Kadesh-barnea (Dt 1:18).

Chapter 13
SURVEYING THE PROMISED LAND

13:1-16 ***Send men:*** At this time a scouting party was commissioned to spy out the land of promise in order to make plans for immediate conquest. One man was taken from each tribe in order to form the party. Ephraim and Manasseh represented the descendants of Joseph. The Levites were separated from the other tribes, and thus were not included. The descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh completed the twelve tribes of Israel. ***By the commandment of the Lord:*** When comparing the statement of Deuteronomy 1:19-23 with this context, it seems that the "commandment of the Lord" here refers only to God allowing the people to do what they sought to do, that is, spy out the land. God wanted them to fully trust in Him, not in the report of spies. Moses' account in Deuteronomy indicates that God initially wanted the people to go immediately to engage the occupants of the land of Canaan, without seeking reassurance from a scouting party. So their lack of faith in the power of God to be with them in the immediate conquest was manifested in their sending of a scouting party. On this occasion, we must view God's command to send the scouting party only as an appeasement of the peoples' lack of faith. But as history unfolded in reference to the events that took place, the scouting party only increased their doubts and lack of faith in God. Their lack of faith subsequently led to their humiliation of wandering in the wilderness for almost forty years.

13:17-25 ***Spy out the land:*** The normal requests for information was made by Moses in order to reassure the strength of the people of Canaan, as well as reconfirm their goal of dwelling in a land that flowed with milk and honey. All the requests were indications of Israel's lack of faith in trusting God to take the land, as well as trusting in God's promise of what was waiting for them when they possessed the land. We must keep in mind that Moses did not need this information. He only asked the spies to bring the information back in order to reassure the people to go up and take the land immediately.

13:26-33 The report of the spies confirmed the fact that Canaan was a land of milk and honey (See Ex 3:8). But in the minds of the spies, the land was filled with a strong people who lived in fortified cities. It is certain that not all the people were giants in the land, nor all the land was desolate. The negative spies simply picked the points on which they wanted to focus in order to give a discouraging report. In this sense, therefore, their report was not completely true. By being selective in what they reported, they discouraged the people. ***Grasshoppers:*** Other than Caleb and Joshua, the weakness of the faith of the other spies was revealed by the comparison of themselves with the occupants of the land. Instead of giving their weak faith an opportunity to grow by trusting in God, the spies discouraged the people from going up immediately to take the land. It is possible that the spies believed that dwelling in the wilderness was better than taking the land, for they gave no encouragement to the people to prepare to take the land. Since they were not willing to take the land immediately as God wanted, then at least some of them were thinking about returning to Egypt. We assume that God knew that they would rebel against immediately

taking the land. Nevertheless, He offered them the opportunity in order to test their faith.

Chapter 14

NEGATIVE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE

14:1-10 ***The people wept:*** Their lack of faith in God moved them to quickly accept the pessimistic report of the spies who also focused on the negative aspects of the land (See Dt 1:27). ***Return to Egypt:*** Total rebellion had now set in. In their minds they had forgotten the struggles of bondage in Egypt. They knew they could not survive in the wilderness, and thus they formed a plan to return to Egypt. The plan, however, was a rebellion against God. ***Joshua ... Caleb ... tore their clothes:*** Leadership demands a positive attitude. These two had also gone with the spies. They had the same information as the other spies about desolate parts of the land and the strong stature of some of the inhabitants. However, they knew through faith that the land could be taken. The leadership of Joshua and Caleb was manifested at this time of social chaos among the people, for they focused on the positive and not the negative. Negative spirited people cannot be leaders for God. And when times of social chaos prevail, leaders must be positive for God. ***Stone them:*** Leaders who stand with God and for that which is right will often be rejected by the people (See At 6:8 – 7:60). And thus, if one is not able to stand against the erroneous beliefs and practices of the masses in order to do that which is right, he or she cannot be a leader for God. Rocks will always be thrown at leaders, but leaders who stand on the rock of God will always overcome. In this case, God directly intervened by appearing at the tabernacle for all to see in order to pronounce judgment on a nation of little faith that stood against His will and His leaders.

GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE NATION

14:11-45 ***I will make of you a greater nation:*** On this occasion that would have been a turning point in the history of the world, God first addressed Moses. In the address God referred to the signs that the people had seen. But in seeing these signs, they still did not believe to the point of fully trusting in God. The fact is that the miracles did not produce the faith that was necessary for the people to follow the commandments of the Lord into great conflict with the forces of evil. In fact, the more one depends on the miracles as his or her foundation of faith, the less one seeks to follow the commandments of God in facing the wiles of the devil. Miracles stimulate an initial faith, but as in the case of the entire nation of Israel, the initial spark of faith must only be the point from which one grows in a faith that will move mountains. Faith that moves mountains no longer needs miracles to reconfirm it (See comments Jn 20:26-31). In fact, the faith that is necessary to move the mountains cannot be built on the continual experience of miracles. Strong faith is a faith that does not walk by sight (miracles), but by trusting in the presence of God's promises through His word. Israel had been given the word of promise (to receive the land), and the word of conquest (they could take the land). But they refused to follow through by growing in faith. Because they did not follow the word of promise, God was willing to scrap the entire nation and start again to fulfill the seedline promise to Abraham. He was willing to fulfill the promise by building another nation through Moses. We must not forget, that it was God's eternal plan to bring Jesus into the world for the salvation of all those who walk by faith. If this could not be fulfilled through Israel, then God was willing to wait until after building another nation through Moses. ***I beseech You:*** As the mediator between the Israelites and God, Moses here assumed his example of what Christ would do in the centuries to come. Moses pled Israel's case on the foundation of God's attributes. God is longsuffering, merciful and forgiving. For the sake of a faithless nation, Moses pled that God manifest the attributes of His character in forgiving their sin. ***I have pardoned:*** Though there was forgiveness, there had to be punishment. Except for Joshua and Caleb, all among the people who were twenty years of age and older would not see the land of promise. The period during which this death would take place was according to the number of days the spies were in the land, that is forty years for forty days. This was the time for a generation to pass away, and thus there was mercy in the punishment. Instead of striking this generation dead immediately, they were at least allowed to live out their lives in the wilderness. Only the unbelieving spies died by a plague. ***The people mourned greatly:*** It is not that the people refused to believe the word of God. They did not believe to the point of taking the land immediately. However, they did believe concerning their fate to dwell in the wilderness for forty years, for they all mourned. It is possible that the plague that immediately killed the spies was evidence that God meant what He said. ***We will go up:*** Regardless of the pronouncement of God's judgment that they could not take the land, the people sought to go on their own without the blessing of God. Unfortunately, man by his own works cannot atone for his own sin. Israel had to pay the price for her rebellion, and thus could not change God's punishment by seeking to walk alone in her presumptuous efforts to conquer the land. The fact that they were beaten back by the Amalekites and the Canaanites proved that without God they could not take the land. Their children would remember well this event when they would seek to take the land forty years later under the command of Joshua. They would know that they must go with both the blessing and help of God. When they eventually took the land, therefore, they had to believe that they did so because of God's help.

From Wilderness Wandering To Initial Conquest (15:1 – 21:35)

Outline: (1) Review of the law (15:1-41), (2) The rebellion (16:1-50), (3) Confirmation of the priesthood (17:1-13), (4) Duties of the priests and Levites (18:1-32), (5) Ordinances of purification (19:1-22), (6) Moses' sin in providing water (20:1-13), (7) Refusal of passage by Edom (20:14-21), (8) Succession of Eleazar to be high priest (20:22-29), (9) The brazen serpent (21:1-9), (10) Conquest of the Amorites (21:10-35)

Chapter 15
REVIEW OF THE LAW

This section of the book begins with Israel's leaving Mt. Sinai. It gives little information concerning the almost 38 years that Israel was in the wilderness. The little information that is given concerning the wilderness wanderings is as if Moses did not want to record these sad years of punishment and humiliation, assuming that Israel's legacy of sin should never be repeated. However, God did not forsake His people during this period of wandering. He continued to feed them with manna and quail. The people also had the continuing miracle that their clothes did not wear out, nor did their shoes wear from their feet (Dt 8:2-6; 29:5,6). It is also interesting to note that during this period they did not circumcise their babies (Ja 5:2-8). Joshua reveals that they did not celebrate the Passover during this period (Ja 5:10), though they continued to observe the laws in reference to the Sabbath (Nm 15:32-36). After the wandering, Moses revealed that the period of wandering was for the purpose of humbling Israel to trust totally in God (Dt 8:2,3).

The manner by which Israel lived in the wilderness is not revealed. However, from Numbers 20:1 we could assume that they did not remain in the organized manner that they were in when at the foot of Mt. Sinai. We could assume that the tribes scattered somewhat throughout Sinai, but in 20:1 they all came together again in the desert of Zin at the time of Miriam's death.

15:1-21 ***Sweet savor to the Lord:*** These repeated instructions concerning offerings to the Lord are made to emphasize the worshiper's desire to please the Lord. The metaphor that the Lord smells the offering means that when one makes the offering, the Lord is pleased with the contrite heart of the worshiper. The point here is that when one makes an offering he is to make it according to the will of God. One does not have the choice to determine his own way of offering since it is to the Lord that the offering is made. The lesson is that the worshiper does not have a choice as to how he would worship God, for it is God's choice as to how He wants to be worshiped (See comments Mk 7:1-9). ***Bread of the land:*** With the blessings that come from the Lord are the responsibilities to remember from whom they come. ***Offerings:*** The laws concerning the offering of the firstfruits here included that which was done in the home (See also Lv 2:14). There were two reasons for the offering of the firstfruits. (1) The offering expressed the people's thanksgiving to God for all that He had done for them. (2) The offering of the firstfruits was a means by which the Levites were supported to work on behalf of the spiritual needs of the people.

15:22-36 ***Done unintentionally:*** This would be sin committed out of ignorance by either the entire nation or by an individual. Atonement could be made for such a sin. ***Does anything presumptuously:*** This would be sin that was committed out of defiance of God's will. The one who sins willfully would be cut off from the people because he despised the word of God. The example of the one who was stoned for picking up sticks on the Sabbath illustrated the presumptuous sin. The individual knew the law that had previously been given (Ex 31:14,15; 35:2,3). Nevertheless, the individual ignored the word of God, and committed a defiant act against the law of God. This context, therefore, illustrates God's grace toward those who sin out of ignorance, but manifests His judgment against those who willfully defy His law.

15:37-41 ***Tassels in the borders:*** These would be fringes on the borders of their clothing in order to remind them of the laws of God. By remembering the laws of God, they would guard themselves from sinning ignorantly against God. ***Do not seek after your own heart:*** This is the spirit of idolatry within man to create a god after his own image, and then a religion after his own desires. When men forget the law of God, they will create their own gods and laws to soothe their own consciences. When one is ignorant of the law of God, he will create his own religious laws, and then digress from the true God of heaven to a god he creates after his own imagination.

Chapter 16
THE REBELLION

16:1-19 It is in the context of this event that the authority of Moses was challenged. The subsequent punishment of the conspirators reveals God's harsh judgment against any who would seek to defy His anointed leaders. ***Korah:*** Korah was a Levite of the family of Kohathites, a cousin of Moses and Aaron. He was joined by Dathan, Abiram and On who were of the tribe of Reuben. Korah recruited 250 fellow conspirators from the tribe of Levi. ***You take too much on you:*** Their error was in their self appointment to leadership. In doing such, they questioned the God-appointed leadership of both Moses and Aaron. They sought to set aside God's appointed leadership in order to set themselves up as leaders. It was true that they were part of the holy assembly of Israel, but they were wrong in assuming that being a part of the holy assembly gave them a right to set aside the leadership of both Moses and Aaron. They presumptuously thought that they could assume leadership as priests among the people. ***You assume too much:*** Moses' words were a rebuke, but also a repetition of what Korah had said to Aaron and himself. In seeking the priesthood of Aaron, Korah was seeking the spiritual leadership of the people. He was involved in a sin of arrogance. Dathan and Abiram were challenging the civil leadership of Moses by ignoring the fact that they could not go into the land of milk and honey because of their own rebellion against God. This generation of leaders was barred by God from entering the land of promise, and thus at this time they thought they would set aside God's appointed leadership. ***You make yourself a prince:*** They were accusing Moses of making himself a dictator over the people. They had forgotten that Moses was directly appointed by God. Moses' reply was that he had not led them for the purpose of gain, nor did he lead them in a harsh manner. He was not a dictator or a self-appointed leader. Their accusations against Moses, therefore, were only for the purpose of justifying their mutiny against God's appointed authority. Their accusations, therefore, we launched against Moses on the basis of political reasons.

16:20-40 Because of the pleas of Moses and Aaron, the entire assembly of Israel was not destroyed by God because of

the sin of one man. However, the families of Korah, Dathan and Abiram were destroyed with their fathers as the judgment of God came upon them and the 250 other conspirators. The judgment did not come as a result of a civil war that could have broken out between the followers of Moses and the followers of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. The judgment was direct from God as Moses here indicated. The judgment was swift and definite in that the conspirators were swallowed up by the earth. The gravity of the sin was manifested in the fact that there was no time made for repentance and sacrifices. This was sin against God's anointed leadership, as well as defiance against the law of God. For this reason the judgment was given in a manner that it struck fear in the hearts of all Israel. Since God knew that such mutinous behavior would eventually come in the future of Israel, He wanted this illustration of judgment to be known among all Israel so that there would be no doubt concerning His attitude toward those who would act in a mutinous way against His anointed leaders.

16:41-50 ***Israel murmured:*** The ignorance of the people prevailed over common sense. They held Moses and Aaron personally responsible for the judgment that came upon the conspirators. It is evident, therefore, that the schemes of Korah, Dathan and Abiram were also in the hearts of many of the people of Israel. God's judgment, therefore, was again unleashed against the nation to the point that 14,700 perished from a plague that He sent among the people. The plague was stopped only when Aaron made atonement for Israel.

Chapter 17
CONFIRMATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

17:1-13 The confirmation of the priesthood of Aaron was to prevent others from assuming the position. ***Staff:*** Aaron's staff was a symbol of the tribe of Levi. This miraculous action was to prove to all Israel that the sons of Aaron and the Levites were chosen by God and separated from Israel for the spiritual service of the nation. They were thus not self-appointed. ***Kept for a sign:*** Or, it was kept for a sign of the God-appointment of Aaron and his sons and the tribe of Levi as the priestly tribe of Israel. The exercise confirmed the priesthood of the Levites at this time. Nevertheless, the staff was to be kept in the ark of the covenant for all time in order to remind the people that Aaron, his sons, and the tribe of Levi were the God-appointed priests of Israel. No one was to presume to be a high priest of Israel other than those who descended from Aaron.

Chapter 18
DUTIES OF THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES

18:1-7 These instructions in this historical context reemphasize the sacred duties of the priests (See 3:1 – 4:49). If Israel rejected or struggled against God's official appointment of Aaron, his sons and the Levites, then they were actually struggling against God and rejecting His will. At the same time, the Levites were warned to assume the responsibilities of their appointment, being cautious that they follow God's instructions (See 17:13).

18:8-32 ***I have given them to you as a portion:*** Aaron is here reminded that he, his sons and the Levites, as the spiritual leaders of Israel, were to be supported by all Israel. Since they were to function on behalf of Israel in spiritual matters, it was the obligation of those for whom they ministered before God, to fully support them. Because they could not work as all Israel in order to provide for their families, it was the responsibility of the rest of Israel to support them. We understand from these instructions that the priests were to take a portion of all that was offered for the sacrifices (See comments 1 Co 9:1-14). ***Covenant of salt:*** It was a covenant that would not be dissolved, but would last throughout the generations of Israel. Only when the generations of Israel ended in Christ would the Levitical priesthood cease. ***Tithe:*** The priests were to receive a tenth from the nation, but they in turn were to offer a tenth of the tithe as an offering to the Lord. The priests, therefore, were not without their responsibility of offering to the Lord. The lesson is that no one is exempt from making an offering to the Lord. Though the priests worked full-time because of the offerings of the people, they were also to tithe to the Lord that which they received from the people. No one was to rob God by keeping back offerings (Ml 3:8-10). Those who presume to worship without offerings are deceiving themselves.

Chapter 19
ORDINANCES OF PURIFICATION

19:1-10 ***Ordinance of the law:*** This unique phrase here indicates the cleansing of Israel after the great plague that had just happened. Their defilement because of their rebellion had to be cleansed in order for them to stand again before God. There was the need for national cleansing in order to be a holy people before God. Though hygienic and spiritual cleanliness were different, the two were related in reference to Israel's acceptance before God. Hygienic cleanliness was in reference to their social contact with one another, whereas spiritual cleanliness was in reference to their connection with God. In this context, their cleansing is in reference to their contact with the many who had died during the plague (See also Lv 12-15). The laws on physical and spiritual cleanliness were from God. For one to be spiritually clean, therefore, he had to be obedient to all the laws of God in reference to cleanliness. ***Water of separation:*** Prepared before the need arose, this water was used for the ceremony of cleansing those who were impure from the defilement of sin. During the ceremony for cleansing that took place on this occasion, a heifer without blemish was presented to Eleazar. This heifer was slain outside the camp (See Ex 29:14; Lv 4:11,12,21). After the sprinkling of the blood of the heifer, the animal was completely consumed on the altar of sacrifice. The ashes were mixed with the water of separation that was used for the removal of sin.

19:11-22 There were many in the camp of Israel who were unclean because they had come into contact with those who died from the plague. Though people could become unclean for other reasons (see vss 14-16), the primary reason in this context was the necessity to be cleansed because of their contact with those who died from the plague. The ceremonial procedures that were to be observed here went deeper than the ceremony. There is always the need for the people of God to cleanse themselves before God. God's people must be

cleansed of defiled hearts and rebellion against His law (See Dt 6:4,5; 30:6). They must be a people who are filled with the Spirit of God, and thus continually living with a contrite heart before God (See Ez 36:25-38). ***Defiles the tabernacle:*** This indicates that there is a connection between physical cleanliness and spiritual cleanliness. The physical cleanliness according to God's law was an outward manifestation of one's inner self. If one was not physically clean according to the law, then his heart of rebellion against God's law was revealed. In this context where Israel was given the laws of physical cleanliness, those who refused to submit to such laws were cut off from Israel. God's forgiveness was thus conditioned on the willingness of the individual to submit to the will of God. There was no grace without obedience to the will of God. God's grace will not save the willful sinner.

Chapter 20

MOSES' SIN IN PROVIDING WATER

20:1-13 ***Kadesh:*** This was the end of the wilderness wandering. At this point the tribes reassembled for entrance into the land of promise. From how this text reads, it seems that the tribes did not wander in the wilderness according to the organized manner they were in 38 years before this meeting at the desert of Zin. They could have been wandering separately from one another, and then organized together at this point. At this time their organizing together probably took from three to four months in order that this new generation of Israelites reacquaint themselves with one another, and then make plans to take the land. There was also the mourning of Miriam and communication with the Edomites. ***There was no water:*** It is possible that the springs had dried up. Or, it could have been that there was not enough water in the area for the assembly of this great multitude of approximately three million people. ***Egypt:*** The younger generation had not experienced Egypt. They had possibly heard of Egypt from their fathers who by this time died in the wilderness. It was for them easy to complain about going somewhere they had never been before. Their murmuring, however, is the result of people who have no vision for the future. ***Speak to the rock:*** These two leaders knew the consequences of murmuring against the care of the Lord. In his frustration, Moses did not follow the exact instructions of the Lord. He struck the rock instead of speaking to it, following the instructions that had previously been given many years before when he was instructed by God to bring forth water from the rock in Meribah (Ex 17:1-7). This one error cost him his entrance into the land of promise. ***Must we bring forth water:*** This statement of Moses and Aaron did not bring glory to God. It was not by the power of Moses and Aaron that the water was to be provided. The water came forth by the power of God, to whom they should have given credit on this occasion (See Lv 10:3; Ps 99:5,9). ***You did not believe:*** Belief is always manifested in our actions. It was not that Moses had no faith in God. Moses allowed his frustrations with the people to cloud his actions in reference to what God commanded. This is often a problem with frustrated leaders. They act contrary to the will of God when the people do not obey according to the will of God. Frustrated leaders often become rebellious when proclaiming the people to be rebellious. The sin of leadership is when leaders behave in a sinful manner in order to keep the people from sin.

REFUSAL OF PASSAGE BY EDOM

20:14-21 Moses had assumed that conquest of the land could not happen by entering from the south. His strategy, therefore, was to divide and conquer. If the Israelites entered into the land through Jericho, then the inhabitants of the land could not assemble a great army together against them. His strategy, therefore, meant that they would have to pass through the land of Edom. ***Your brother Israel:*** The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob who was the father of the Israelites. Whether the Edomites still practiced circumcision after the custom of Abraham, we do not know. But as one of the buffer nations to what would become the land promised to Abraham, the great grandfather of both Esau and Jacob, we would have assumed that the Edomites would have allowed Israel the right of passage through their land. ***The king's highway:*** Moses reassured the king of Edom that the Israelites would not plunder Edom on their journey through the land. They would travel the normal trade route all travelers took as they passed through Edom. ***Edom refused:*** The king of Edom mustered his forces to block the passage of Israel through the land. This was a fatal error on his part, as history would judge the Edomites with extinction from history because of these actions. Moses would not lead the Israelites in conflict with the descendants of the brother of Jacob. So he turned his forces away from Edom. The judgment of Edom would come later in history.

SUCCESSION OF ELEAZAR TO BE HIGH PRIEST

20:22-29 You rebelled against My word: Both Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter Canaan because of their rebellion at the waters of Meribah. Both were at least 120 years old at this time, and their leadership of Israel was now coming to an end. Aaron, who was older than Moses, was to die first. ***Bring them up to Mt. Hor:*** There was to be no elaborate funeral ceremony over this great leader. As people sometimes get caught up in the ceremonies of the funeral of their leaders, the death of Aaron was to be quiet and obscure on a mountain, away from the ceremonies of any funeral service. Lest people lose their confidence in the leadership of God by focusing on the leadership of man, it was best that this great spiritual leader die in the obscurity of a mountain scene. When Moses and Eleazar descended from the mountain, the people saw that the spiritual leadership of Israel now rested on Eleazar. They knew that Aaron had died, and thus mourned his death for the customary thirty days.

Chapter 21

THE BRAZEN SERPENT

21:1-3 ***Arad the Canaanite:*** It may have been that Moses planned this attack into Canaan from the south, the original plan of God to enter into Canaan. However, King Arad heard of the plan, and thus routed the Israelites, taking some of them captive. ***Utterly destroy:*** From what the Israelites vowed, it

would seem that their original plan was not to utterly vacate the Canaanites from the land. This was contrary to the plan of God to rid the land of the wicked Canaanite culture.

21:4-9 ***There is no bread:*** This, of course, was not true since God was supplying them with manna and quail. It was that they had not received the bread of Egypt which their fathers had received. They were possibly still living on the word-of-mouth communication from their fathers who had formerly lived in Egypt. The problem here was that their complaints originated from their lack of faith that God would continue to supply them while they resided in the wilderness. ***Fiery serpents:*** The bite of these serpents probably resulted in death from a burning poisonous venom. ***We have sinned:*** They at least recognized that it was sin to speak against God and His designated leader, Moses. ***Serpent of brass:*** God was establishing a foundation for symbolism that would later find substance in the sacrificial death of Jesus who would be lifted upon the cross for the spiritual healing of all men (See Jn 3:14,15; compare Is 53:5,6; Rm 8:3; 2 Co 5:21). All that people had to do in this case was to look upon the brass serpent. If they did, they would be healed. The spiritual significance in reference to Jesus on the cross would be that all men must look to Jesus for healing. It was supernatural that the fiery serpents were sent among the people. It was supernatural that the people were cured when they looked upon the brass serpent. In all that happened incident God supernaturally reaffirmed His presence with the people, and thus answered their complaints with His presence. He would remain in their presence if they would remain faithful to His law.

CONQUEST OF THE AMORITES

21:10-20 Other than Moab to the east of the Jordan River, the locations through which Israel journeyed are not found on our modern maps. ***Book of the wars:*** These uninspired records were kept of Israel's military exploits, especially the military conquest of the land of Canaan. These records do not exist today. ***Dug the well:*** This is the transition of the people into the land where they would provide for themselves after the miraculous provision of God during their wilderness wanderings. In this incident the Lord said He would give them water, but they had to dig the well. God will not do for man what man can do for himself.

21:21-35 ***The Amorites:*** The Amorites were one of the primary cultural groups of the Canaanites (See Gn 10:16). The name was sometimes used to refer to all the Canaanites of the region (See Dt 1:7,19,27). At the time Israel arrived, Sihon was ruling over a part of the Amorites to the east of the Jordan River. It was not Moses' original plan to war against the Amorites on the east side of the Jordan. Because Sihon would not allow Israel to pass, but came out to fight against Israel, Israel fought against the Amorites and Sihon was defeated. Israel subsequently occupied all the cities of the Amorites (See Dt 2:30-37). ***Chemosh:*** This was the imagined god of the Moabites. The fact that Israel defeated the Amorites, who had previously defeated the Moabites, was a testimony that the imagined god of the Moabites could not deliver them from the one true and living God in which Israel believed. Though the Amorites had a great faith in their own god, their god was only imagined. They were thus trusting in themselves and the power of human faith in one's own created god. But this belief was not strong enough to stand against the one true and living God who defeated the Amorites through the proxy of the Israelite armies. Israel's victories over all the armies of the Canaanites is a testimony to the fact that God was at work among the Israelites. ***Og:*** Og was one of the last of the tribes of giants in Canaan. He was the king of a warrior nation that dwelt within walled cities. Because of the pasture lands of the territory of Og, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh desired to dwell in this land (See Dt 3:15-17). ***Do not fear:*** God encouraged Moses and Israel by giving them victory over the nations that would border the land of Canaan. Though inexperienced in battle, the Israelite army was successful in battles against every nation. God thus proved that He was with Israel. We would assume that Israel's confidence grew as they approached the walled cities that were within the land of Canaan. ***Heshbon:*** This city's name means "city of daughters" or "the mother city." It is significant that the people of this region had for centuries been nomadic, traveling from one location to another. However, archaeologists have confirmed that sometime prior to the arrival of Israel to this region, the Canaanites began building cities in order to settle down in the region. Some of the cities were without walls (Dt 3:5), indicating that the people had peace with one another. When Israel arrived in the region, many of the cities were still without walls, and thus easy to conquer. With little effort they could take the land, especially since God would be fighting to strengthen them.

Conflict With The Moabites (22:1 – 25:18)

Outline: (1) Balak's efforts to curse Israel (22:1-41), (2) Balaam's curse turned to blessing (23:1 – 24:25), (3) Sin of Israel at Baal-peor (25:1-18)

Chapter 22

BALAK'S EFFORTS TO CURSE ISRAEL

22:1-20 ***Balaam:*** This incident is injected in the account of Israel's historical venture into the land of Canaan in order to give us information that their battle was not only with armies, but also with maintaining their morality among pagan nations. Balaam was a Gentile who was at least known by Balak, the king of Moab. Balaam was a religious leader about whom we know little, other than the fact that he seems to have been one of questionable character whose gift of preaching was for hire (See Jd 11; Rv 2:14). ***Balak:*** The news of Israel's conquests had by this time been circulated throughout the Palestinian region. Fear gripped the hearts of the Canaanites and surrounding countries, for they saw no one who could defeat the armies of Israel. It was at this time in history that the Canaanites were evidently at peace with one another, for they built cities in which to settle in the region. However, they were not at peace with one another to the extent of organizing their armies together to fight against the army of Israel. Though Moab was not one of the countries that was to be destroyed by Israel,

Balak, in ignorance of this fact, sought a well-known religious personality to curse the Israelites. ***Rewards of divination:*** Balaam is known for being the preacher who preached for pay. He was out for hire from the highest giver (Jd 11). ***You will not go:*** God's answer to the messengers of Balak, was that Balaam not go in answer to the plea of Balak. Unfortunately, the appeal of the money was too great for Balaam, and eventually he succumbed to the pleas of the Moabite king. ***Princes ... more numerous and ... distinguished:*** There was more involved in this situation than the bribe in getting Balaam to come to the aid of Balak. Man's desire to be involved with the rich and famous was also used to entice Balaam. The thirst to become involved in the political life of those who are in power is a tremendous temptation for those who seek to be important in a world of poverty. The desire for notoriety often prevails over nobility. ***House full of silver and gold:*** In view of Balaam's character that we understand from Jude 11, we would interpret this statement as a subtle attempt by Balaam that he was out for hire to the highest bidder. God gave him permission to go, but God also knew the character of Balaam, that it would eventually be revealed through his lust for money. We would interpret Balaam's initial refusal to receive the silver and gold as a flippant statement to clear his name before the messengers. In actuality, however, he went for the silver and gold with which he was hired to curse Israel.

22:21-41 God approached Balaam in three ways in order to remind him of his position in relation to Balak and the Israelites. ***Angel ... standing in the way:*** The first obstacle to Balaam going to Balak in fulfillment of his desires for hire came from an angel who could be seen only by the donkey. The angel stood in the road in order to restrict the passage of Balaam. ***A path in the vineyard:*** The second effort to dissuade Balaam was when the angel stood in the road in the vineyard in order to block again the passage of Balaam. ***In a narrow place:*** The third effort of God to stop Balaam was when the angel stood in a narrow passage where it was impossible for the donkey to pass. Throughout all this resistance to block Balaam by the angel standing in the way of the donkey, Balaam complained to the donkey and unmercifully struck his donkey, for he had not seen the angel. At this point is recorded a case where an animal talked by the power of the Lord. ***Your way is perverse:*** It is here that we understand that the motive for Balaam going to Balak was because of his lust of money. If the donkey had not turned from the path of the angel, the angel would have slain Balaam. Balaam eventually went to Balak, and subsequently was later slain in Moab's battle with Israel. ***Promote you with honor:*** Balaam's lust for pomp, position and power made his motives perverse before the Lord. This is good advice for both politicians and preachers who seek the same for themselves at the expense of the people they serve.

Chapter 23
BALAAM'S CURSE TURNED TO BLESSING

23:1-12 After Balak had built the seven altars, and the sacrifices were made, Balaam could only bless Israel, and not curse the nation as Balak had requested. Within the pronouncements made by Balaam, God spoke of the uniqueness of the nation of Israel. ***The people will dwell alone:*** Because of Israel's belief in the one true and living God, she would dwell alone among the nations who had created gods after their own imagination. She would be alone throughout the centuries because of her belief. ***Who can count the dust of Jacob:*** Balaam prophesied that throughout the centuries to come, Israel would grow into a mighty people as was promised to Abraham (See Gn 12:1-3). ***The righteous:*** Israel was a nation of good people, and thus did not deserve to be cursed by a pagan nation. ***What have you done to me:*** Balak's reaction to Balaam's blessing of Israel was his realization that Israel would be against him. To his reaction Balaam reminded Balak that he could only pronounce that which God put in his mouth. Of course, the blessing was indirectly a curse of Balak, which curse he suffered in the near future by his death.

23:13-26 The same preparations and offerings were again made as were done for the first pronouncement of Balaam. In this prophecy, God spoke directly to Balak. ***God is not a man:*** The God of Israel was not created after the imagination of the Israelites. For this reason, He cannot tell a lie as Balak demanded. Neither could the destiny of Israel be changed, as men change their minds according to their own desires. The God of Israel was not a god who could be manipulated by the whims of men as could the god of the Moabites. This pronouncement of Balaam was the preacher's lesson to an idolater who controlled his people by manipulating their religious beliefs concerning their false god, Chemosh. ***God is with him:*** Through Balaam, God reminded Balak that He had proved many times that He would be with His people. They were thus a strong and confident people with the strength of an ox. The nation of Israel existed because of God, not because of the leadership of any man. The existence of Moab depended on the power of King Balak. But the existence and power of Israel rested in God. ***A people will rise up:*** This prophecy that was surely well-known by every Israelite, spoke of the nation of Israel. She would rise up as a lion and eat until the prey was consumed. No enemy, therefore, would be able to stand against her. If Balak would be the enemy of Israel, therefore, then the nation of Moab would be eaten as the prey of Israel. ***Do not curse them:*** Balak's frustration is revealed in these words. Since Balaam could not curse Israel, then he asks that he say nothing. Balaam reminded Balak that he could only say what the Lord put in his mouth. But this was not sufficient for Balak since Israel posed a great threat to him. He wanted divine help in defeating the threat of Israel.

Chapter 24

23:27 – 24:14 Israel dwelling in tents according to their tribes: This was surely an awesome sight to behold. All the nation of Israel that would change the world forever was dwelling in one place at this time in history, a moment that would never be repeated again. Balaam could see the people around whom the history of the world would be made and the people through whom God would eventually bring the Redeemer into the world. For centuries God had worked to bring this people to the brink of the Jordan River in order to

possess the land of Canaan. Centuries later He would through Israel bring the Son of God to the cross for the redemption of mankind. Neither Balak nor Balaam understood any of this, and thus Balaam could only bless the heritage of God. ***Vision of the Almighty:*** When the Spirit came upon Balaam, he pronounced the purpose and will of God through Israel. This was the oracle of God, the blessing of His people who would bring about His eternal purpose. ***Blessed is he who blesses you:*** Unfortunately, Balak could not see the work of God in Israel. He, as many other nations, did not see the eternal plan of God to work through Israel to bring the Messiah into the world. Through this nation that now rested in the valley, God was continuing the seedline of woman who would crush the head of Satan (See Gn 3:15). Those who would support Israel in God's plan to settle the nation in the land of Canaan, would be blessed. However, those who would work against Israel, would find themselves working against the plan of God.

24:15-19 In this pronouncement of Balaam, he told Balak what Israel would do to Moab. ***Star:*** A king would come out of Israel who would bring judgment upon Moab. Though Balaam was speaking of earthly events among nations, some have concluded that a secondary reference here is to the star that appeared during the time of the birth of the Messiah. ***Scepter:*** Reference here is to the rule of kings. A ruler would arise in history who would crush the rule of Moab. He would have dominion over his enemies. Again, some have assumed that reference is to the rule of King Jesus over His enemies. In the centuries after this event, Jesus did reign over his enemies (See comments Dn 2:44; 7:13,14; Ph 2:5-11; Rv 2:27; 3:21). But in the context of these immediate events, the kings of Israel would eventually rule over Moab in the centuries to come.

24:20-25 In this final discourse, Balaam turned his prophecy toward the nations. Edom would become the possession of Israel, which prophecy came true during the reign of David. Because of their despiteful actions against Israel when they initially came out of Egypt, they would be destroyed forever as a people. The Kenites would be taken into captivity. Asshur and Eber would, as the Edomites, perish forever. Thus ended the final pronouncements of God through Balaam, after which both Balak and Balaam went their way.

Chapter 25
SIN OF ISRAEL AT BAAL-PEOR

25:1-5 ***The people began to play the harlot:*** This moral and spiritual apostasy on the part of Israel may seem incomprehensible in view of the many struggles through which God had brought them. But it revealed the continual problem they had in dwelling among other people (See Ex 34:12-16; Dt 7:1-6). Led by the daughters of Moab, Israelite men succumbed to the lure of bowing themselves to false gods. The seriousness of the matter was manifested in the sternness of the punishment for their immoral actions. The leaders of the people whom God held responsible, were first hanged. People are directed by their leaders, and thus if the leaders do not lead people to God, they are responsible. The second action that had to be done was to rid the nation of those who had committed the sin. And thus the judges executed those who had joined themselves to women who worshiped the Baal of Peor.

25:6-18 The brazen sin permeated the camp of Israel to the point that one without shame brought a Midianite woman before the assembly in the sight of Moses. This woman was brought into the camp even while supplications were being made to stop the plague that was ravaging through Israel. ***Phinehas:*** On this occasion, the righteous indignation of Phinehas moved him to take immediate action. Both Zimri and Cozbi were thrust through with a spear. Because he acted quickly, Phinehas and his heritage were rewarded with a covenant of perpetual priesthood in Israel. ***Hostile ... with their tricks:*** Deception was apparently part of the problem in reference to Israel's sin with the Midianites. It may have been that the innocence of Israel was exploited by the Midianites. Nevertheless, though the Israelites were innocently tricked or deceived, they were still responsible for their sin. The Midianites paid the price for the sin in that God judged them through the proxy of the Israelite army (See ch 31). It seems that Balaam played some part in this moral destruction of Israel in that he condoned or counselled both the Israelite men and Moabite women to commit fornication (See 31:16; compare Rv 2:14).

Preparations For Entering Canaan (26:1 – 36:13)

Outline: (1) Second census of Israel (26:1-65), (2) Inheritance laws for women (27:1-11), (3) Joshua anointed as leader (27:12-23), (4) Repetition of offering laws and holy days (28:1 – 29:40), (5) Laws concerning vows (30:1-16), (6) War with the Midianites (31:1-54), (7) Assigning of land east of the Jordan (32:1-42), (8) Israel's camps from Egypt to Canaan (33:1-49), (9) Instructions concerning land allotments (33:50 – 35:34), (10) Laws concerning the inheritance of daughters (36:1-13)

Chapter 26
SECOND CENSUS OF ISRAEL

26:1-65 This was the second census taken of the nation of Israel. The laws for taking the census were given in Exodus 30:12. The purpose of the first census was to determine the number of males for war (1:28). This second census was to prepare the people for occupation of the land of Canaan. In this census, only those who were 20 years old and older were counted. The total number was 601,730, which was slightly less than the census of males that was taken in chapters 1 & 2. ***The land will be divided:*** The allotment of the land was to be according to the size of the tribes, and then according to the casting of lots. The larger portions of land were probably first determined for the larger tribes, and then lots were cast for the land (33:54). The casting of the lots made sure that no nepotism or favoritism was practiced in the distribution of the land. ***The Levites:*** No land inheritance was given to the Levites. They were allocated cities within the land. ***They will surely die:*** It was a new nation that was entering the land. During the time of the rebellion when they refused to enter Canaan 38 years before, those who were of the age of 20 and

older had died in the wilderness. This was a new generation. They were not responsible for the sins of their fathers, and thus were ready to enter the land that was promised to their fathers. Only Joshua and Caleb of the older generation were allowed to enter. They were allowed to enter because of their faith 38 years before when they wanted, against the counsel of the other spies, to go up immediately take the land. They were able to enter the land by faith.

Chapter 27
INHERITANCE LAWS FOR WOMEN

27:1-11 ***Our father died in the wilderness:*** The father of the daughters of Zelophehad was not of the rebellion of Korah, and thus died a natural death. But he had no sons through whom inheritance traditionally came (See Dt 25:5-10). The request of these daughters was valid, and thus inheritance was given to them. If a man died without a son, then the right of inheritance was passed through the daughters. This law of inheritance advanced the womanhood of Israel, for it gave women legal rights that previously they did not have in reference to inheritance laws.

JOSHUA ANOINTED AS LEADER

27:12-23 ***Mt. Abarim:*** From this mountain God showed Moses the land of milk and honey. Though he was not allowed to enter because of his sin at Meribah (20:1-13), he was allowed to see the land. It was now time for Moses to transfer leadership to one who could lead Israel to the completion of God's promise. ***Joshua:*** God saw in Joshua the one who could lead Israel in the conquest of the land. He was thus set before the assembly of Israel, and then charged and designated the successor of Moses. He, as Caleb, proved his leadership 38 years before when he disagreed with the other ten spies who discouraged the people. He was willing to speak against that which was wrong, and thus manifested one of the first qualifications that a leader must have. Though the majority might consent to that which is wrong, God's leaders must be willing to stand alone for that which is right. ***Judgment of Urim:*** Moses spoke face to face with God. However, God's communication with His primary leader was now changing. Joshua must go before the priest who would make judgments in reference to the Urim and Thummim. These were two small objects in the ephod that was worn by the priests. The objects were used for determining judgments from God (Ex 28:30). Joshua thus assumed the position of a military leader, for from this time forward Israel needed such a leader in the conquest of the land.

Chapter 28
REPETITION OF OFFERING LAWS & HOLY DAYS

28:1-15 Before Israel entered Canaan, it was necessary to remind the people of their daily, weekly, monthly and yearly offerings in worship to God. These offerings were necessary in order that the people be reminded of the One who brought them into the land and sustained them there if they remained faithful to God. Though the instructions concerning these offerings might be confusing to us, they were understood by Israel in the context of the rural setting of the nation when the people settled throughout the land. There was no "general assembly" for worship in the instructions concerning worship and offerings, and thus the families of Israel settled in the country on small farms that were scattered from one another throughout the land. Their offerings, therefore, were the occasion for them to worship God in a family setting. Every offering that was to be eaten by the family was an opportunity for the parents to teach the children concerning the significance of the offering. We must understand the context of these offerings, therefore, in reference to the rural setting in which Israel lived in Canaan. We must be careful not to read into the context of the worship of Israel our worship culture of general assemblies in designated places of worship, which thing was foreign to the worship of the families of Israel.

28:16-31 The Passover had not been observed throughout the wilderness wanderings. But now it was time to rehearse the laws concerning the time and event of the Passover (See Ex 12:16; Lv 23:7,8). Immediately after the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread was to begin (See Lv 23:5,6). This feast lasted for seven days and was the offering of the first-fruits of the harvest (Ex 34:22).

Chapter 29

29:1-6 The feast of trumpets was so named because the trumpets were blown throughout the land. This feast was conducted in the middle of the Jewish year. Blowing of the trumpets was Israel's means of national communication. They could know when the trumpets were blown by the blowing of the ram's horn throughout the land. We are not told exactly how this was done. However, we would assume that every rural family had a ram's horn that was to be blown when signaled by the blowing of the horn by the residents of an adjoining farm. The signal could thus be relayed throughout the land that the trumpets had been blown by the priests.

29:7-11 The day of atonement was the day when an offering was made for the sins of the people. This was an annual event wherein the high priest entered into the holy of holies of the tabernacle to make atonement for the nation as a whole.

29:12-40 The feast of tabernacles (booths or tents) lasted for seven days. The people dwelt in tents during this time in order to commemorate their wandering in the wilderness. It was a time to be thankful to God for bringing them into the land of Canaan wherein they could dwell in their own houses. All of the offerings and feasts were in thanksgiving to God for His grace in bringing them into the land of milk and honey. If such were required of Israel in order to thank God for the material blessings they had received, then certainly the Christian should be more thankful for the spiritual salvation that he has received in Christ. For this reason, the Christian is a priest of God on duty continually, offering up his entire life in gratitude to God (Rm 12:1,2; 2 Co 4:15).

Chapter 30
LAWS CONCERNING VOWS

30:1-16 ***He will not break his word:*** Vows were made both to God and man. When a man spoke the word of his

vow, it was binding on him as a self-imposed law. No written contract had to be made for a man was to be good for his word. But this was not the case with certain women. A woman's vow had to be certified by the man to whom she was responsible. There were different vows made in this context, one in reference to general vows and the other which was more specific as the vow of a Nazarite (See ch 6). ***Woman ... in her youth:*** If a daughter was still living with her father, then her vow had to have the approval of her father. ***If she should marry:*** If a woman was under a vow at the time of her marriage, then her husband had the authority to either ratify or annul the vow. If a woman made a vow after she was married, then the husband could either allow or nullify the vow. If the husband did not allow the vow, then she was not obligated to keep it before the Lord. ***A widow and a divorced woman:*** In this case, the vows of those who had no man to whom account was to be given were based on the laws that applied to men in the making of their vows.

Chapter 31
WAR WITH THE MIDIANITES

31:1-24 What is recorded here is Moses' obedience to the will of God to make war with the Midianites (25:17,18). ***Take vengeance:*** Because the command to go to war with the Midianites was from God, this was the vengeance of God against those who had deceived His people. God's vengeance upon Midian must be understood from a greater perspective than punishing Midian for seducing Israel to sin. We must always keep in mind that Israel was the seedline nation through whom God would bring the Redeemer into the world. Any nation that set itself against Israel was setting itself against the redemptive work of God. We must understand that Satan was working behind the scenes to destroy the seedline promise that was initiated in Genesis 3:15 and continued through God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. Satan also worked behind the scenes to destroy the seedline, and thus destroy the work of God to crush his head. In order to warn all nations against devising any plots to destroy Israel, they were given another example through the destruction of Midian not to interfere with God's people, and thus seek to interfere with the seedline work of God. ***They warred against the Midianites:*** With only 12,000 men, Israel caught the Midianites by surprise and slew all their males and five of their kings. Balaam was among the slain because he counselled the women of Midian to seduce the men of Israel. ***Moses was angry:*** He was angry because the army had saved alive the women and children. He subsequently ordered that the older women be killed, as well as all the male children. The Israelite men had forgotten that it was the Midian women who had deceived them into committing fornication. It could have been, therefore, that the men with whom some had committed fornication sought to keep alive some of the women with whom they had sinned. Though we view this judgment as harsh, we must keep in mind that God was clearing an immoral culture from the path of Israel. When they entered Canaan, Israel was to cleanse the land of corrupted cultures that were bent on immorality. The wickedness of the Canaanites had at this time grown to the point of no moral return, and thus, as with Sodom and Gomorrah, they had to be judged with annihilation. No adult was to be left alive who could infest Israel with immoral behavior. God did not want Israel to go in the way of Genesis 6:5 where every imagination of man was continually evil.

31:25-54 After the battle, they were to first take a count of all the spoils that had been taken from their enemies. After this, they were to divide the spoils in half, half going to the soldiers who actually went to war, and half for the rest of the people who stayed at home and watched the camp. One fifth of one percent of what was given to the soldiers was to be given to Eleazar the priest. Two percent of the half that was given to the people was to be given to the Levites. Because the soldiers were thankful that none of them had lost their lives in the war, they brought all the jewels of gold to the tabernacle to be offered as an atonement for themselves. These jewels of gold were stored in the tabernacle as a reminder of the great victory that God had given them over the Midianites.

Chapter 32
ASSIGNING OF LAND EAST OF THE JORDAN

32:1-42 ***Let this land be given to your servants:*** This was the land east of the Jordan River that had been taken from the Amorites and Og. It was good pasture land, and thus Reuben and Gad, who were later joined by half of the tribe of Manasseh, requested of Moses that they possess this land. This request was innocent on the surface, but there were some flaws in the reasoning of these tribal groups. It was a request based on pure economics, for they were ignoring the destiny of Israel, that they possess the land of milk and honey according to the promise of God. It was the will of God that all the tribes work together to take the land of Canaan and settle therein. The request also ignored the duties of these tribes to help their brothers to conquer the land of Canaan. It seems that they did not want to cross the Jordan, and thus assume their military responsibilities with the other tribes. ***Will you sit here:*** Moses interpreted their request to be an effort to shun their responsibilities to fulfill the will of God. ***You have risen up in your father's place:*** Moses' statement was direct and true if Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh were planning to forego their military responsibilities to help the others conquer Canaan. It was simply not right for part of the people to do the work for all the people. Everyone must be involved in the work of God. ***We ourselves will go ready armed:*** Realizing that their request was either misunderstood, or assumed to be an effort to settle against the will of God, the leaders of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh quickly responded that they would go with their brothers into battle against the Canaanites. They did not want to repeat the consequences of their fathers' rebellion almost forty years before by refusing to take the land immediately on the command of God. As a result of that refusal, all Israel had to pay the price. Because they committed themselves to remain militarily with the army of Israel, Moses called Eleazar and Joshua in order that their commitment be confirmed before all. The people needed to know that they had taken ownership of their leadership.

Chapter 33

ISRAEL'S CAMPS FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN

33:1-37 ***The journeys of the children of Israel:*** In giving this log of Israel's travels from Egypt to Moab, Moses listed forty locations where Israel camped. Since almost all the places are unknown to us today, we would assume that the names were given to the places by Israel at the time when they camped at the location. The locations were probably given the names listed in this chapter according to some experience that Israel had at the location. Though we may be frustrated because we do not know the exact locations, the purpose for giving the list in this chapter was not to recount a road map of travels. The listing here was for Israel in order that their experiences through the wilderness be made known to following generations.

33:38-49 There is a difference between this record and the one given in 21:4-20, which account can be better understood if we assume that the tribes were somewhat scattered throughout the wilderness until they came together at Kadesh (20:1). If the tribes were dwelling at different places in the wilderness, then different names would have been given. We must not assume that any list of the names is complete. Each list was given to highlight the experiences of any number of the tribes at the time they were at any particular campsite.

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING LAND ALLOTMENTS

33:50-56 ***Drive out ... destroy ... pictures ... molten images ... high places:*** The reason for the command to destroy these things was for the preservation of this segment of human society, the nation of Israel. If they did not follow this command, the immoral and idolatrous culture of the Canaanites would infect Israel. They would then digress to a low moral level where they themselves would be driven from the land. Unfortunately, they disobeyed this command. They subsequently digressed to the moral level of the Canaanites they drove out of the land. In the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities centuries later, Israel too was driven out of the land of Palestine. When they were driven from the land, God then worked with only a remnant in order to bring the Messiah into the world. When interpreting any instructions that God gave to Israel in reference to the land of Canaan, the interpreter must always keep in mind the eternal purpose of God. It was not that God chose Israel because they were a righteous people. They were stiffnecked and often rebellious. But God knew that such a people were necessary in order to survive the ancient world and fulfill the promise made to Abraham, that in him all nations of the world would be blessed through the coming of the Savior into the world. The nation of Israel was only the vehicle through whom God brought the Savior into the world. At the cost of the existence of the Canaanites who had given up on God, Israel was to be preserved for the eternal purpose of God. Though Israel as a whole fell away in apostasy, God still worked through a remnant of Israel to accomplish His eternal plan of redemption.

Chapter 34

34:1-15 God drew the borders of the land that Israel would possess. The south began at the southern end of the Dead Sea, which border extended to Edom and Kadesh-barnea. From Kadesh-barnea it extended along the river of Egypt (a dry river called "Wadi el-Arish"). It then extended to the Mediterranean Sea. The western border was the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. We do not know exactly how far north this border extended. Some have suggested that it extended north to the southern part of the Lebanon Mountains. The northern border reached from the Mediterranean Sea to Mt. Hor, and then to Hamath, Zedad and Hazar-enan. The present location of all three cities is uncertain. The eastern border ran from Hazar-enan south to the Sea of Galilee (Sea of Chinnereth), then south along the Jordan River, and eventually to the Dead Sea. What is significant about these borders is that Israel for centuries never truly possesses all this land. The borders are mentioned in Joshua 15 – 19 and Ezekiel 47:13-20; 48:28,29.

34:16-29 Since Israel had waited for centuries to possess the land, the division of the land according to tribes was a historical moment for everyone. Because of the seriousness of the event, a special committee of men was chosen to allot the land to each tribe according to the size of each tribe.

Chapter 35

35:1-5 Because the Levites were given no inheritance of land, they were given cities in which to dwell and pasture lands that surrounded the cities.

35:6-15 Forty-eight cities were given to the Levites. Though the Levities never truly possessed all these cities, the command that they be given such was valid throughout the history of Israel. Refuge cities were established in reference to the civil laws of the nation. Six of the cities that were given to the Levites were designated as refuge cities. Three were on the west side of the Jordan and three were on the east side. These cities were places to which a manslayer who unintentionally killed someone could flee for safety from the vengeance of a near kinsman of the person who was accidentally killed. The principle of the refuge cities was based on the law of the avenger who could avenge the death of a kinsman who was killed. The next of kin had the right to avenge the death of a kinsmen. Unless the avenging kinsman acted out of the heat of the moment when a kinsman was unintentionally killed, the assailant could escape to a city of refuge until a judgment could be made.

35:16-25 In this context, definitions are given for those who had a right to flee to the cities of refuge. There was a difference between a manslayer, someone who accidentally killed someone, and a murderer. The difference between the two is based on intent. The murderer was one who intentionally killed someone. The manslayer was one who had no such intent, but inadvertently did kill someone. Only the manslayer was able to flee to the cities of refuge. Other laws applied to the one who intentionally murdered another. ***A murderer:*** One of the evidences that a murder took place was the use of a weapon. The weapon could be of iron, stone or wood. If a murder took place, the avenger could slay the murderer on the spot. This same law applied to those who out of hatred killed another. ***Thrust ... without enmity:*** The manslayer, or the one

who killed someone unintentionally, fell under different rules. This person could flee to the city of refuge in order to escape the vengeance of a near kinsman. However, if one exercised the privilege of escaping to a refuge city, then he had to stay in the city until the high priest died.

35:26-34 If the manslayer did venture outside the borders of the refuge city before the death of the high priest, then the near kinsmen of the one who was slain, could kill him without guilt. If the high priest died, the manslayer could return to his family, and the near kinsmen had no right to avenge the death of his kinsman. ***Mouth of witnesses:*** Capital punishment could be carried out only when more than one witness could testify to the fact that murder was committed. No amount of money could be paid to free the one who was guilty of murder, neither could any amount of money be paid in order that a manslayer leave a city of refuge before the death of the high priest. ***Do not defile the land:*** The death penalty was given in order to keep society pure of the sickness of murderers. Once one murders another, then the land is defiled by those who have no value for life. The death penalty, therefore, was God's means by which to keep society cleansed of moral decay in reference to those who had no value for life. Once a society gives up its value for life, then it has digressed to a state of corruption in which God has no favor toward it. When one intentionally murders another, he has given up his right to life for he has proved that he does not value the right of others to live. It is for this reason that societies must allow the teaching of moral principles to their citizens. And in teaching moral principles, there must be a standard for judgment that is greater than the desires of men. Men will digress to the point of genocide. For this reason there must be a standard for moral judgment that is greater than man himself. Only God can offer this standard by which men make moral laws.

Chapter 36
LAWS CONCERNING
THE INHERITANCE OF DAUGHTERS

36:1-13 The laws that are given here must be viewed in reference to the laws that were given in 27:1-11 concerning the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad. In the case here, if a daughter of one tribe was married to another, then the wife did not have permanent rights to the land of her husband if he died. During the year of Jubilee all land was to revert back to the original tribe. This law restricted the ownership of land to move from one tribe to another when a man married the daughter of another tribe. The purpose of the law was to prevent the subdividing of the land among the tribes throughout the generations of Israel. The title deed of the land was always in the name of the man, and thus during the year of Jubilee, all land was returned to the male descendants of each particular tribe. In reference to the daughters of Zelophehad, their original allotment of land was in the name of their father. Though they married outside their tribe, the land remained in the name of their father, and thus the inheritance of their land remained with their father's tribe. It was not passed on to the tribe of their husbands. One of the key principles concerning the laws of God for Israel is revealed in the giving of this law. God's laws were fair and just. They were laws that proved that they could not have come from man, but from God Himself.

Deuteronomy

WRITER

This book is Moses' farewell address to the nation of Israel. It was written as Moses' last words to the nation (See 1:1,5; 4:44,45; 31:24-26; see intro. to Gn). Since Jesus attributed to Moses the writing of the law (Gn – Dt), this is certified evidence that Moses was the writer (See Jn 5:35-47).

Because of some detailed prophecies that Moses made in this book, liberal theologians have assumed that Deuteronomy could not have been written by Moses who died around 1,400 B.C. These theologians assume that the book was an accumulation of various prophets who lived sometime near the discovery of the book of the law (Gn – Dt) in the reconstruction of the temple in 621 B.C. In this year a copy of the book of the law was discovered by Hilkiah while doing renovations on the temple. The book was brought to King Josiah who subsequently initiated great reforms throughout Israel (See 2 Kg 22:8 – 23:25; 2 Ch 34:14 – 35:19). Because of the accuracy of the prophecies of the book that refer to the condition of Israel prior to 621 B.C. when the northern tribes were taken into captivity, liberal theologians assume that portions of the book were written by various writers who lived in the time of this apostasy of Israel. But such beliefs in reference to the book assume that the prophecies were historical records, not prophecies of God in reference to the future of Israel.

These critics of the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy also base their assumptions on the fact that various parts of the book were written with different writing styles of the Hebrew language. But they fail to see a common characteristic of inspiration in reference to the Spirit's direction in the writing of an author of inspired Scripture. The Holy Spirit allowed writers to use their own styles of writing in producing Scripture. When Scripture was written over a long period of time, therefore, the style of the writer would change. The Spirit did not inspire Scripture to be written by a dictatorial method of writing, that is, dictating the literary style of the author. We also do not assume that Moses sat down one day and wrote in one setting all the book of Deu-

teronomy. We only assume that he completed all the book immediately before Israel's entrance into Canaan. He spoke the words of this book on the east side of the Jordan in the wilderness (1:1). However, the book could have been written throughout the years of the wilderness wandering. He was forty years in the wilderness with Israel. He had forty years to write Genesis through Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy was the last book, but this book could have been written in segments over a period of months or years, thus presenting the different styles of composition in writing. Simply because the styles of composition are different in any book of Scripture does not assume that the book was written by different people. It only manifests that the Holy Spirit allowed the inspired writers to inscribe Scripture according to the writer's own style of writing. In this way the personality of the inspired writer was also revealed, making the Scriptures real and the writer a real person. We would not, therefore, assume that the Holy Spirit, through inspiration, used the writers as robots in order to communicate the word of God to people. He used real people to communicate a real message.

BOOK

The key verse of this book would be 6:5: *"And you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."* The laws of Deuteronomy were probably written sometime near the close of Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness and prior to Moses' death on Mt. Nebo east of the Jordan (See 1:3; 31:24-26). The laws of Deuteronomy were spoken to a new generation of Israel, the generation of sons and daughters of those who originally came out of Egyptian captivity. Many of those who were about to enter into the promised land had heard only stories about the plagues of Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea. They had not experienced the events at the foot of Mt. Sinai and much of the wandering through the wilderness. This was a book, therefore, that was written to a young generation of Israelites who needed to be reminded of the God their fathers personally experienced in their deliverance from Egyptian captivity and the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai.

The name "Deuteronomy" means "second law." The name was ascribed to it by the translators of the Septuagint and was adopted by Jerome in the Latin Vulgate. It was not a new law for Israel, but a repetition of the laws that were given at Mt. Sinai. However, in the repetition of the law, Moses explained and amplified various portions of the laws that were given about forty years before. Deuteronomy is thus more than a restatement of the former laws. Moses expounded further on the laws that were originally given at Sinai to a new generation of Israel that was about to enter Canaan. By doing this he applied the law that was given forty years before to this new generation of Israel. In this way, Moses prepared the people for entering the land of promise. He reaffirmed the covenant conditions and promises that God had made with their fathers. He reminded the people what God had historically done for the nation, and thus, he spiritually prepared them to accept and live by the civil and moral laws of God. Moses emphasized the nation's obligation to submit to the conditions of the covenant that God had made with Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai. If they did not submit throughout their generations to come, the nation would be sent into captivity.

Deuteronomy is unique. It is a record of God's plan of redemption from beginning to end. It concludes God's historical record of mankind from the beginning that is recorded in Genesis, until the time the Redeemer would come into the world. Recorded in this book were the final principles by which the nation of Israel was to live, and thus preserve the seedline through whom the Savior would come into the world. Because of its importance in reference to this eternal plan of redemption, Deuteronomy is quoted no less than 85 times in the New Testament. Only six New Testament books do not have quotes from this book. The reason for this number of quotations in the New Testament was to link Israel and Moses with the revelation of the Messiah as the "Moses" who would lead the people into a new Israel. It is imperative, therefore, that we connect the dots between the book Deuteronomy and the Christ in order to understand God's prophecy of the Christ to come.

Introductory Address To Learn From The Past
(1:1 – 4:43)

Outline: (1) Introduction (1:1-5), (2) Travel experiences (1:6-46), (3) Confrontations (2:1-23), (4) Initial conquests (2:24 – 3:29), (5) Admonitions (4:1-40), (6) Refuge cities east of the Jordan (4:41-43)

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1:1-5 Moses spoke these words to Israel *"on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness"* (1:1). Some Bible students assume that possibly Joshua added these initial words to the book after Israel crossed the Jordan River. Regardless of their origin, the location where the words were spoken was "in the wilderness." The wilderness that is identified here could refer to any area from Mt. Sinai to the valley just east of the Jordan before Israel crossed over into Canaan. ***Eleven days' journey:*** If one normally walked from Mt. Sinai to Canaan, it would take only eleven days. But because of the refusal of Israel to initially take the land, it took them 38 years of wilderness living to make the journey. They sacrificed eleven days of walking for 40 years of wandering because they refused to be obedient to the will of the Lord to immediately take the land after they left Mt. Sinai (Compare Hb 11:1-11). ***Horeb:*** This

was another name for Mt. Sinai. ***All that the Lord had given him:*** This statement needed to be made here for generations to come. Moses was revered as the greatest prophet of Israel until the coming of the Messiah. It would be assumed, therefore, that in the years to come false prophets would claim that God spoke through them as He spoke through Moses. Moses here, however, shuts the book on any commandments that might come to Israel through false prophets. No more revelation of the law for Israel was given after this final declaration that was written in this book. "The law," Genesis through Deuteronomy, therefore, was sealed. Moses had written all that had been declared to them, and all that the Lord revealed for Israel. This law was to carry Israel throughout almost 1,400 years of history. ***Declare this law:*** The word for "law" is *torah*. Torah is used here to refer to the totality of the law of God that came through Moses, though in other places it can refer to specific teachings (See Pv 1:8). Torah eventually became the name that was given by the Jews to the first five books of the Bible, which is also known as the Pentateuch (See Er 7:6).

TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

1:6-8 See Ex 18:18-26. ***The plain:*** This was the Jordan Valley, the northern part of the Arabah that ended at the Dead Sea. ***The Negev:*** Reference is to "the south," the wilderness area south of Judah. ***Amorites:*** This great nation of people came into the area of Canaan from the north and settled primarily on the eastern side of the Jordan. It would be the greatest nation that Israel would conquer, and thus conquering it gave them confidence to conquer any of the tribes of the Canaanites. ***Canaanites:*** The Canaanites were dwelling in the land at the time of the arrival of Israel, and had been there since the days of Abraham. The term refers to all the tribal groups within the land, and not to all the people as a composite nation of people. ***I have set the land before you:*** As a gift from God, the land was to be possessed by Israel because Israel's destiny was salvational in reference to the Redeemer coming into the world. Israel's possession of the land was in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (See Gn 12:1-3). The reason for the possession of the land was for the preservation of the seedline nation. The reason for the preservation of the nation was to prepare mankind for the coming of the Savior of the world. This small parcel of land, therefore, had eternal implications for mankind. Once the purpose for the possession was completed, the land was to become just another parcel of land throughout the world. Israel would thus lose its right to the possession of the land as God's special gift to them once the eternal purpose for giving of the land was fulfilled. Since the purpose for Israel has been fulfilled in Christ (Gl 3:26-29), then Israel's divine right to the land is no longer valid.

1:9-18 ***God had multiplied you:*** They had been multiplied into a great nation at the time they stood east of the Jordan. They would throughout history be multiplied as the stars of heaven. This was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that He would make of his seed a great nation (See Gn 15:5). ***Choose wise men:*** The burden of leadership was too great for Moses for this great number of people. Because he assumed that the people could choose their own leaders, he allowed them the responsibility to select leaders (Compare At 6:1-6). ***You will not respect persons in judgment:*** The primary qualification of a leader is to be fair in all judgments. Bribes distort justice, and thus disqualify one from being a leader. For this reason, those who are greedy for money can never be leaders for God for their judgments are tainted with the love of money.

1:19-25 ***Great and terrible wilderness:*** This was the condition of the Sinai Peninsula at the time of the wandering of Israel. ***Kadesh Barnea:*** This location is not known, though it plays an important role in the geography of the history of Israel. It would have been somewhere near the southern border of Israel. ***Go up and possess:*** The exhortation of Moses was that Israel immediately take possession of the land. Doing so would manifest their faith in God. The command to immediately take the land, however, was rejected by the people. Such was considered rebellion against God. ***We will send men before us:*** As the text here reads, this was the plan of the Israelites, not God or Moses. Moses expected that they go up against the Canaanites without any report from spies. If they had done such, then their faith in God would have been manifested. This saying "pleased Moses" only in the fact that Moses went along with the plan of the people. God allowed them to send the spies without His approval. The spies reported that it was a good land, but their little faith was not strong enough to go forward with their new knowledge of the strength of the inhabitants of the land. They thus rebelled by not going up immediately and taking the land. Rebellion comes when men have little faith to trust in the work of God in their lives.

1:26-33 See Nm 13:1 – 14:45. ***Rebelled:*** Their rebellion was in the fact that they did not immediately go up and take the land because of their unbelief. God allowed the sending of the spies. However, their refusal to go up immediately was called rebellion because it was God's command that they immediately take the land. Their lack of faith to trust in God that He would be with them in their confrontation with the Canaanites was considered rebellion. ***The people are great and taller than we:*** This report of the spies was correct. But the fact that the Canaanites were great and taller would have been the opportunity for God to prove that He was with His people when they conquered them, which they eventually did 38 years later. ***You did not believe:*** This one statement portrays the reason why the Israelites were disciplined with 38 years in the wilderness. They did not become atheists. Their faith in God was simply not strong enough to carry them into action against the Canaanites. Their infant faith was not strong enough to listen to the encouragement of Moses to immediately take control of the land of milk and honey after receiving the law on Mt. Sinai. Regardless of their unbelief, however, God treated the people as a father who would carry his son. God carried them across the wilderness, choosing where they would camp throughout their 38 years of wilderness living.

1:34-46 ***This evil generation:*** Their omission of God's law to take the land was as bad as their commission against His law. They were thus an evil generation in the eyes of God because they were a nation of little faith. The generation that came out of Egypt thus disinherited themselves because they

omitted the command to go up and take the land. One point is here proved in reference to the miraculous work of God. This generation of Israel had experienced the great wonders of God, the plagues of Egypt, and the crossing of the Red Sea. The miracles of God were sufficient to produce faith, but it was not a faith that was strong enough to take the Israelites against the great nations of the Canaanites. This little faith must be developed in the heart of man apart from the presence of the open miracles of God. It can be acquired only when men experience the providential work of God in their lives as they trust in Him by walking by faith. ***Wholly followed the Lord:*** The two exceptions to the unbelief of the nation were Joshua and Caleb (Nm 14:10). In this case, these two men, who fully complied with the will of God because of their faith, would eventually be rewarded greatly before all Israel. For generations to come, therefore, their heritage would be an illustration of faith that seeks to take action. They were given an inheritance in the land. Caleb eventually received the portion that he had surveyed as one of the spies (Ja 14:9-12). Joshua was given the privilege of leading the Israelites into Canaan in the place of Moses. Great men of faith are always rewarded. ***Angry with me:*** Moses did not exclude himself from the results of unbelief. As all good leaders, they are the first to confess their unbelief. Because of the complaints of the people, he, in his frustration, did not sanctify the Lord at Meribah (See Nm 20:10-12), but lashed out with a bitter spirit against the people (See Ps 106:32,33). ***I am not among you:*** When the Israelites realized that they were banned from the land, they again rebelled against the will of God. They sought to enter the land on their own strength, for God said He would not be with them. He thus commanded them not to go up, but in disobedience they did. They paid the price by the loss of lives, for the Amorites chased them as if bees were after them. ***Amorites:*** Numbers 14:45 mentions that the Amalekites and the Canaanites chased them, but here reference is to the Amorites. The terms "Amorites" and "Canaanites" are sometimes used interchangeably in the historical account of these events. ***The Lord would not hearken:*** Their weeping was more about remorse over their loss, than true repentance. They wept over their own failures, not over the fact that the Lord was not with them. They still had to learn that they were an insignificant and inexperienced army, and thus, they could do nothing against the inhabitants of the land without the help of God. In fact, their small stature as a people and inexperience in battle would be the occasion by which God would prove to the nations in the years to come that He helped them to conquer the land.

Chapter 2

CONFRONTATIONS

2:1-15 See Nm 21:4. ***Esau for a possession:*** Israel was commanded to refrain from any engagement of war with Edom, for Edom was a kinsman to Israel. God had given the land of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, as a possession. For this reason Israel was not to annex any of the territory that belonged to the Edomites, for it was a God-given possession. ***Do not distress the Moabites:*** As He commanded Israel not to afflict the Edomites, so He commanded that they should not be hostile toward the Moabites. ***Giants:*** The Rephaim were a people of great stature. They inhabited portions of Palestine at the time Israel was in the wilderness. Goliath was possibly a descendant of this race of people. ***Anakims:*** These people were also known for their great stature. Seeing these people who inhabited the land of Canaan certainly brought fear to the Israelites who were a people of short stature. ***Horims:*** These were possibly a great civilized people who populated part of Palestine. ***The Brook Zered:*** This was a dry river bed that was the border between Edom and Moab (See Nm 21:12). From the time Israel left Kadesh Barnea to the time they passed over the brook Zered into Moabite territory, a period of 38 years had passed.

2:16-23 ***Ammonites:*** As with Edom and Moab, Israel was to treat the Ammonites as brethren. The Ammonites were also called Zamzummims, a word which means "a distant and confused noise." They were also a people of great stature. Nevertheless, they were dispossessed from the land by the strength of the Lord working in an Israelite army of soldiers who were small in stature. The fact that the smaller people of Israel were able to dispossess the Anakims and Ammonites from the land is evidence that Israel did not work alone in this effort. The nations around surely concluded that the God of Israel was working with Israel to take the land because of the conquering power of a small and inexperienced army of Israelites. Add to this the fact that all the people who descended from the seed of Abraham knew that the land had been promised to the sons of Jacob (Gn 12:1-3). Nevertheless, Ammonites fought to retain the land. They knew that they were fighting against the will of the God of Abraham who gave the land to Israel. When Israel eventually took the land, then they would understand that they were fighting a losing battle, for they fought against the will of God that the land be given to the heritage of Abraham through Jacob. ***They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place:*** A great historical lesson is learned here. The inhabitants of the land at the time Israel arrived, the Ammonites, had themselves dispossessed other nations before them. None of the people who resided in the area were original people to the land. As one nation dispossessed another throughout history until the arrival of Israel, social confusion existed in the land. However, when Israel dispossessed the existing nations upon their arrival, they themselves were not dispossessed until 722/21 B.C. (Assyrian captivity) and 586 B.C. (Babylonian captivity). And then, they were dispossessed only when God empowered the Assyrian and Babylonian armies to take the Israelites into captivity because of Israel's idolatrous rebellion. Because Israel was able to stay in the land for such a long time is proof that they stayed only because of the power of God. Only when they eventually rebelled against God were they dispossessed from the land.

INITIAL CONQUESTS

2:24-37 See Nm 21:21-25. The victory over Sihon and Og, the Amorites, was the beginning of the conquest of Canaan. The conquest of this great nation was a signal to Israel that God was working in their army to conquer a great people. ***Put***

... the fear of you upon the nations: Not only did the victory of the great nation of the Amorites bring fear into the hearts of the inhabitants of Canaan, it also increased the morale of the army of Israel, for at the time the Amorites were a great nation. ***Sihon***: Moses certainly knew the negative response that would come from Sihon. Nevertheless, he still approached him for peace since he dwelt on the eastern side of the Jordan. ***God hardened his spirit:*** As with the Pharaoh of Egypt, Moses' request became the opportunity for Sihon to harden his heart against the will of God. For this reason, God took the credit for hardening his heart. When God's will becomes the opportunity for one to rebel, then God's will has hardened the heart of the rebellious. Sihon's response thus illustrated the heart of all those who dwelt in the land of Canaan. They had hardened themselves against God to the point that there was no moral return to the will of God. They were on a course of social disintegration. Their iniquity had reached its fullness as God had previously stated to Abraham when he was in the land over 400 hundred years before (See Gn 15:16). As Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites were at the point of no return to the morals of God. Their immoral culture, therefore, had to be eradicated from the history of humanity. ***We left none to remain:*** Critics have used this work of God against the inhabitants of the land as an accusation to prove that the God of the Jews and Christians is a mean and harsh God. But this accusation ignores the eternal plan of God with reference to Israel. In His instructions, even the little ones were to be destroyed from the land according to the will of God. But the point is in the fact that these cultures had digressed to total immoral degradation. They were far from repentance. If these immoral and idolatrous cultures were not eradicated from the land, then Israel, God's seedline nation to bring the Messiah into the world, would have been infested with sin. The fact that Israel did not totally eradicate these immoral cultures in obedience to God proves the point. Israel was eventually infested with the idolatrous immorality of the peoples they did not destroy, and as a consequence, they themselves had to be driven from the land. God was left with only a remnant of Israel with which to work in order to fulfill the promise that was made to Abraham to bless all nations through his seed. At this time, God's eternal plan of redemption for the salvation of all men was more important than the existence of the immoral and idolatrous tribal cultures of the land of Canaan. ***Little ones:*** The argument is always made as to why even the children were to be killed. We must consider that Israel was not a settled nation, and thus they had no gardens to provide for a great orphanage of children. The parents of the children were unrepentant, and thus the children had to suffer the consequences of their parents' sins. If the children were spared, Israel would have brought itself into social chaos and famine. The manna and quail ceased when they entered the land. Israel could not become a nation of orphans. She also could not violate the purity of the lineage of each family. It was God's purpose to begin the nation in Canaan as a pure race of people to whom He would give the inheritance of the land. At the time, they could not have taken care of thousands of orphans. We must also keep in mind that it was better for the children to return to the salvation of God in heaven, than to grow up in the immoral cultures of the Canaanites, who in many cases offered their own children as sacrifices to their pagan gods.

Chapter 3

3:1-11 See Nm 21:33-35. ***Og:*** Og, the king of Bashan, was totally defeated by the army of Israel. The result was a great encouragement to Israel, for the nation celebrated this victory. Og was the last obstacle to entering Canaan (See Ne 9:22; Ps 135:11; 136:19,20). ***Sixty cities:*** This number did not include surrounding towns and villages. Moses stated that these were well fortified cities, and thus this was a long and hard victory. We could assume that there were at least sixty battles in this conquest over Og. Og was one of the first nations of giants to fall to Israel. The strength of the cities and the stature of the people of the nation of Og manifests the strength that was given to each individual soldier of Israel. When an Israelite soldier stood against a giant of Bashan, we must assume that God could empower the individual soldiers with the physical strength to overcome giants. This is the only answer we have for the victorious Israelites who were of small stature. ***Bedstead:*** This bed measured thirteen and a half feet long (about 4 meters) and six feet wide (about 2 meters). The reason Moses gave us these dimensions was to establish a record for history concerning the size of the people of Bashan that Israel overcame in physical battle. The size of the bedstead signifies the amount of physical empowerment that God gave to the Israelite soldiers in their war against these giants.

3:12-22 See Nm 32:1-42. Since the land of Og was a vast land that was suitable for pasture, it was taken by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. At this time, however, only the wives, children and livestock of these tribes remained in the land. The fighting men were obligated to continue with their brethren in the eradication of the nations from the land of Canaan west of the Jordan.

3:23-29 See Nm 27:12-23. ***Let me go over:*** This was Moses' prayer to the Lord, which prayer the Lord only gave half an answer. He only allowed Moses to see the land from Pisgah, but not to go over and experience the land. ***The Lord was angry:*** Moses had been given the privilege of leading Israel from Egypt to this point, and thus shouldered the great responsibility of leadership. With such responsibility comes great judgment, which judgment was brought upon him for striking a rock for water at Meribah. We can thus understand Moses' prohibition from entering the land by understanding that leaders are to be held accountable for things the people are often allowed to do. *"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we will receive the stricter judgment"* (Js 3:1). The burden of a leader is that his actions will be carried to an extreme by those who follow him. Therefore, the leader must be very cautious concerning his behavior. Leaders lead by their behavior, as well as their instructions. It is a wise leader who behaves according to the will of God, and instructs people to so live. Our moral behavior must be transformed by the word of God (See comments Rm 12:1,2).

Chapter 4
ADMONITIONS

4:1-8 ***Harken ... do:*** This would be the first commandment to Israel. They must listen to God and carry out His will. Listening, without obedience, is not sufficient. True listening is carried out in behavior. ***Statutes:*** These would be the initial revelations of God that were written and established as principles by which men must live. ***Judgments:*** These would be the revealed decisions of God concerning specific matters as to how Israel carried out the written statutes of God in their lives. ***Commandments:*** These would be all direct instructions of God concerning the conduct of one's life. Reference would be to specific things God told the people either to do or not to do. ***You will not add ... nor ... diminish:*** This is a perpetual principle in reference to the law of God (See comments Gl 1:6-9; Rv 22:18,19). Any religious tradition that is bound on the consciences of men would be considered adding to the law of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). Any written religious law of man that would bring men into the bondage of one another would be considered adding to the law of God. ***Baal***: This word means "lord." Peor would be the identity of the local baal ("lord"). When men create in their own minds a spiritual being to which they feel conscience-driven to give account, then a lord (baal) has been created. A baal is the result of men giving up a knowledge of the one true and living God for a "lord" they have created after their own imagination. They are thus "lords" to themselves, doing that which is right in their own eyes. Created baals often sanctioned the immoral behavior of those who created them. For this reason, the baals of Canaan were often hideous imaginations of men who sometimes even offered their children in sacrifice for worship. ***Wise and understanding people:*** The nation of Israel was to be a testimony to the existence of the one true and living God. When the nations around Israel observed their behavior, they would conclude that their existence and laws were not from man, but from One beyond the imagination of men (Compare comments At 17:22-31). Unfortunately, throughout their history Israel did not continue to submit to the will of God, and thus blasphemed God among the nations by their idolatrous behavior.

4:9-14 ***Teach ... your sons:*** God's direction in the past is encouragement to focus one's life on the future. Israel's personal experiences of God's direct leading in the past was to be passed on to their children. God's work among them in the past forty years was to be a witness that He worked in their lives to bring them into the land of Canaan. ***You heard the voice:*** Though they did not hear the words from God that only Moses heard, they did hear the great sound from God on the mountain. Moses told them that they must never forget what they heard, and thus pass the awesome and terrifying experience on to successive generations. The generations of Israel must understand that the "voice" was proof that Moses did not invent the law of God from his own imagination. He was only the mediator through whom God spoke His laws for Israel.

4:15-24 The imagined gods that men would create after their own image must never be represented by any work of man's hands. ***Graven image:*** No representation of any imagined gods was to be carved in either stone or wood. No representation of the sexual organs of man or woman was to be made that would incite heathen worship and immorality. Unlike the Egyptians from whom they came, Israel was not to make any representation of any animal as an object of worship. ***Sun ... moon ... stars:*** Again, unlike the Egyptians, the heavenly bodies were not to be objects of worship. They were not to worship the creation. ***God has allotted to all nations:*** Though difficult to understand, the meaning here could possibly be a reference to the principles revealed in passages as Romans 1:20 and Psalm 8. The heavenly bodies manifested the glory of God, which glory the religious people of the world could see, and by which conclude that there was a God. Because they had no direct revelation from God as did Israel, they stopped at the sun, moon and stars in their search for God. They could not see beyond the wonders of heaven to deduct that there was a living God beyond the physical sun, moon and stars. They thus worshiped the creation rather than the Creator (See comments Rm 1:13-32; see At 14:16,17; 17:30). ***Iron furnace:*** This metaphor refers to the time of bondage in Egypt. It was a time of great affliction (1 Kg 8:51; Is 48:10; Jr 11:4). ***Lest you forget the covenant:*** The evidence of their forgetting the covenant would be making any graven image, which image meant that they had created other lords (baals) in their lives than the One who gave them laws by which to direct their lives.

4:25-31 This prophecy certainly haunted those Israelites who were carried away years later into the Assyrian (722/21 B.C.) and Babylonian (586 B.C) captivities. The prophecy is here spoken in a verb tense that reveals that God knew they would forsake His covenant by refusing to live according to the law of the covenant. This prophecy was not given to establish their fate, but to reveal that God knew what they would do. God could know their future without having predestined them to live according to the pronouncement of this prophecy. His foreknowledge does not necessitate predestination. ***Remain long in the land:*** The condition for remaining in the land was their obedience to the law of the covenant. Once they rebelled against the law of God, then they had no right to the land. This principle carried over into the coming of the law of God that would be revealed through the Messiah, through whom God speaks today (Hb 1:1,2). Since Israel refused the Messiah, they cannot claim to have a divine right to the land of Canaan. The message that the Messiah brought was that Israel was to be dissolved into the one body that He would establish (Gl 3:26-29). The promise of the land was fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah in that there was no more need for a preserved nation to bring the Messiah, the Christ, into the world. And since there was no more need for the unique nation of Israel, there was no more need for the special land for the nation. The spiritual nation of God, the church, is now in all the world, not in a specific part of the world as was Israel (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). ***He will not forsake you:*** This promise reached far into the future when Israel would be in the bondage of Assyria and Babylon. After their captivity, He would bring a remnant of all twelve tribes back to the land of promise in order to prepare them for the coming of the Mes-

siah. The condition for God remembering them, however, was that they must have a repentant heart.

4:32-40 ***This great thing:*** Never in the history of mankind on earth had God before or after performed a work as that which He did with the nation of Israel. The nation stands as a testimony to the existence of God since no nation on its own power could have accomplished such great feats that Israel did throughout their history. These words are written in the Bible to give us a testimony to the existence of God who worked specifically with the nation of Israel. God gave birth to them through Abraham, brought them out of the bondage of one of the most powerful nations of the world, Egypt, and then brought them into a land that He promised them centuries before. Israel was a national miracle of God.

REFUGE CITIES EAST OF THE JORDAN

4:41-43 As a historical note, the interjection here of designating three refuge cities on the east side of the Jordan is given (See comments 19:3; Nm 35:6,11-34). These cities would be accessible to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh who dwelt on the east side of the Jordan.

Review Of God's Laws For Israel (4:44 – 26:19)

Outline: (1) Introduction to national history (4:44-49), (2) Law and responsibility (5:1 – 11:32), (3) Worship and holy living (12:1 – 26:19)

INTRODUCTION TO NATIONAL HISTORY

4:44-49 ***Testimonies:*** These would be God's instructions in reference to the moral and religious duties of the people. ***Statutes ... judgments:*** See comments 4:1-8. ***This side of the Jordan:*** See 1:1,5; 3:29. Reference is to the land originally controlled by the Moabites (See Nm 21:26). Here it is identified as the land of Sihon, the king of the Amorites whom Israel had just defeated.

Chapter 5
LAW AND RESPONSIBILITY

5:1-5 Moses' emphasis in the context of chapters 5-11 is to exhort Israel to maintain the law of the covenant. God's covenant would mean nothing if they did not adhere to the conditions of the covenant. In this context, therefore, he rehearsed the very foundation upon which the covenant was based, the ten commandments. God gave this rehearsal because He knew where they would go as a nation throughout their history. The generation who heard the words of Moses at this time would adhere to God's instructions. However, the generations to come would slowly move away from God. Eventually, in the centuries to come, they would be driven from the land because they had forsaken the law of God. The nation's right to possess the land of promise was conditioned on their obedience to the law of God. Once they rebelled against God's law, they gave up their right to the land.

5:6-21 See comments Ex 20:1-17. Though there are some differences between the statements of the ten commandments in this context here and those that are given in Exodus 20:1-17, we must understand that the Spirit here adds interpretations for this generation of Israelites as they prepare to live in Canaan. The generation that was at the foot of Mt. Sinai, when the commandments were first given, had died in the wilderness. The generation to whom Moses was directing the words of Deuteronomy was a new generation that was preparing to enter Canaan. ***No other gods before Me:*** It was not that other gods existed. They existed only in the minds of those who would create a god after their own imagination. This statement, therefore, is warning them against following after their own religious imaginations in order to establish their own religious codes. ***You will not make ... any graven image:*** Once one creates in his mind a god who sanctions his behavior after his own lusts, then he fabricates an image of this god. No image was to be made in Israel that would stimulate worship of one's own thinking. God does not want His people to be stimulated to worship by physical things or places lest they begin to worship the things and places. Those who would create their own religions must remember that their children will always digress further away from God than their parents (See Ez 18:14-17). Every generation that becomes less knowledgeable of God will take another step away from God until a society has digressed into total moral degradation. ***You will not take the name of the Lord ... in vain:*** God's name should never be invoked in making a vain oath. If one would affirm his oath on the foundation of the name of God in order to convince others of his intents that are actually false, then he has violated the sanctity of the name of God. ***Keep the Sabbath day:*** The meaning of the word "Sabbath" teaches the purpose for keeping the day. One is to "cease" from work on this day. The creation was God's illustration that men work for six days and rest on the seventh (Ex 20:11). In doing this, one was sanctifying the Sabbath. But for Israel, keeping the Sabbath was a sign of their covenant with God. The Sabbath and circumcision were the two signs of the covenant, and thus, the nations around Israel were reminded that Israel was in a covenant relationship with God when they saw Israel keeping the Sabbath. It was not simply a sign to the nations around Israel, but primarily a sign to God that Israel was keeping the covenant. Thus the Sabbath was not given as a religious day, but as a day where there would be mutual respect between the citizens of society. Employers could not work their employees without respect for them. And respect for employees was carried out when they were given the Sabbath for rest. The Sabbath was made for man in order to give him rest, not man for the Sabbath. ***Honor your father and your mother:*** This commandment refers to the foundation upon which society is built. The children's honor of their parents is the signal of a healthy society. ***You will not kill:*** Or, "you will not murder." The Hebrew word here for "kill" (*ratsach*) is always used to refer to murder. ***You will not commit adultery:*** Adultery is a sign that society is breaking down, because it is a signal of failed marriages. ***You will not steal:*** When citizens have no respect for the property of others, society moves into chaos. Stealing means that one has no respect for others, and thus feels no social responsibility. ***You will not bear false witness:*** Orderly societies cannot exist where there is lying and per-

jury. Society must exist wherein all speak truth to one another (Ep 4:25). All these commandments, therefore, are given for social order. ***You will not covet your neighbor's wife:*** This commandment deals with the heart of man. Coveting a neighbor's wife is an indication of a failed relationship with one's own wife. If marriage is not held in high esteem in a society, then social chaos will prevail, which chaos will digress a society into moral degradation. It is for this reason that the ten commandments were the backbone of the society of Israel.

5:22-33 ***The voice:*** Men too often flippantly state that God spoke to them. Such careless use of a statement in reference to God personally communicating to a man is contrary to the reaction of those who actually heard God. On this occasion when God spoke, common men were so terrified that they asked for a mediator who only had been sanctioned by God to be a mediator between Himself and man. No one would be so presumptuous as to claim that God personally spoke to him, and then remain alive, for these on this occasion feared that they would die even from hearing the voice of God. When God speaks, therefore, the result is overpowering to fragile men on earth (See Dn 10:5-19; Mt 28:2-4; At 9:3-9; Rv 1:17). As is illustrated with the case of Moses, no man has the right to come into the personal communication presence with God unless personally invited in by God. Those who would claim to have personal revelation of truth from God are presumptuous, and thus not to be followed. They are presumptuous because God now speaks through Jesus who speaks through His written word (Jn 12:48; Hb 1:1,2; 2 Tm 3:16,17).

Chapter 6

6:1-9 The contents of verses 4 & 5 was called the Shema by the Jews. ***The Lord:*** This is from the Hebrew Yahweh, meaning "He is" or "He becomes." It was the Jew's sacred word for God. The word was considered so sacred that they would not pronounce it with their lips. They used the word *Adonai*, "my Lord." ***One:*** God is one, though He has manifested Himself throughout human history in three different ways, through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As deity, God has manifested His eternal being as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order to accomplish the eternal purpose for the creation of all things. ***Heart ... soul ... might:*** This is the totality of the human personality. The emphasis, therefore, is that the totality of man must be given to God. One must not "visit" God occasionally in times of trouble and need. He must be the central focus of one's existence. All of one's life must be consumed with the presence of God.

6:10-19 When given a gift for which one did not work, it is easy to take the gift for granted. In Israel's case, they were blessed with the material things of a land of milk and honey. Satan's best weapon against the spiritual nature of man is to focus man on the physical. Materialism became Israel's downfall as the nation began to move away from focusing on the spiritual. After forty years in the wilderness we would assume that they were initially overwhelmed by the bountiful nature of the land. But after occupying the land for decades, they began to focus on their own skills of productivity. As a consequence, they lost their focus on God. ***Fear the Lord your God:*** Satan was delivered this statement when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Mt 4:10; Lk 4:8). There is no obedience if there is no fear of God who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Mt 10:28). ***A jealous God among you:*** God will stand for no competition in the minds of men. He will not compete with the minds of those who seek to create their own gods in order to go their own way. ***You will not tempt the Lord:*** Jesus referred to this statement when Satan sought to force His hand to work a miracle (Mt 4:7; Lk 4:12). Men tempt God by calling on Him to do a miracle in order that we might believe in Him. We tempt Him to perform a miracle in order that He might earn our obedience.

6:20-25 It is the duty of the parents to pass on to their children the way God has worked in their lives. Children witness their parents' appreciation for all that God has done for them. This appreciation for God's work is a part of the spiritual heritage that parents leave with their children. ***It will be our righteousness:*** Obedience to the law of God is righteousness. The law, therefore, is the righteousness of the people when the people obey it in response to His grace and mercy.

Chapter 7

7:1-5 See Ex 34:11-16. All studies concerning Israel's occupation of the land must be taken in the context of God's eternal purpose. His purpose is the salvation of man. His eternal plan of redemption necessitated the Son of God coming into the world for man's salvation, which blessing was promised to our father of faith, Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Bringing the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, into the world necessitated the preservation of the seedline of Abraham, for God blessed him because of his faith. His seedline was the nation of Israel, and thus for the preservation of the nation of Israel a land had to be procured wherein the nation could reside until the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. The land was Canaan, and thus the Canaanites had to go. In order that Israel maintain her identity, God's commands in reference to her driving out the nations and maintaining her national purity, had to be strictly obeyed. When we come to this context of the Bible, we must understand God's background plan of redemption in order to understand the specifics of His commands to Israel in reference to the dispossession of the nations within the land of promise. At this time, Israel did not understand the eternal plan of redemption that would come through the seed of Abraham. However, we have the entire picture in the Bible in the recorded history of what at this time transpired in reference to Israel's wars against the occupying nations of Canaan, as well as their struggles against the influence of the gods of the nations around them. ***The Hittites:*** These sons of Heth had grown into a very powerful nation of people. From 1,800 to 900 B.C. this nation of people resided in the northern extremities of Palestine and extended into present day Turkey. ***The Girgashites:*** This little known civilization probably resided in the area just west of the Jordan (Ja 24:11). The ***Amorites:*** As identified in 1:7, this nation of people resided on the east side of the Jordan and northern parts of Canaan. ***The Canaanites:*** All of the nations that are here listed were descendants of Canaan, the grandson of Noah (Gn 10:15-18;

see 1:7). ***The Perizzites:*** These may have been relatives of the Rephaim, the giants of the land (Ja 17:15). They dwelt in the hill country of Palestine. ***The Hivites:*** This tribe of people dwelt in the far northern regions of Palestine around Mt. Hermon and Lebanon (Ja 11:3; Jg 3:3). ***The Jebusites:*** This was a people who resided in the southern area of Palestine around present day Jerusalem. The original name of the area, where Jerusalem was eventually established, was named Jebus. ***Utterly destroy them:*** This was a unique event in history, never to be repeated **or** condoned by the action of any other nation. It was unique in the fact that God was at work laying the foundation for His eternal plan of redemption by the preservation of Israel. When Abraham was in the land of Canaan almost 500 years earlier, the iniquity of the inhabitants of the land at that time had not yet digressed to the point of no moral return (Gn 15:16; see Dt 7:5; 18:9-12; Lv 18:21-25). But at this time when Israel was about to enter the land, the iniquity of the Canaanites was full grown. They were thus ready for the judgment of God by the proxy of the armies of Israel. They were civilizations that had given up their right to cohabit the world with other peoples, and thus they had to be eliminated, not simply dispossessed from their land. This was true especially because they were in the proximity of the seedline nation of Israel through whom God would bring the Redeemer into the world. Under no circumstances were the inhabitants of Canaan, who maintained the wicked culture that is mentioned in this context, to survive history. The Israelites were not to marry them (See Nm 25:1-9), neither were any remnants of their idolatrous relics of worship to be preserved. As examples of the judgment of God against sin, they were to be destroyed. ***Groves:*** Even their places of worship, the groves of trees, were to be cut down. No reminder of the religion of these people was to be preserved. They had totally rejected God, and thus, they were to be totally stricken from the history of mankind.

7:6-11 Israel was holy because she had been separated by God from the world of nations. She was a special people in that she was God's own possession for the special purpose of fulfilling the eternal plan of redemption. However, in order that Israel not pride herself because of her recent victories, God said that He did not choose Israel because of who she was. He chose her because of His promise to her fathers. His message here is to prove to Israel that He is faithful to His promises. If the people are faithful to His commandments, He would be faithful to His promise to make her prosper as a nation.

7:12-15 Obedience would have its fruit. Israel's obedience would result in her multiplication as a nation, productivity of the land, and her livestock. Unlike Egypt which was plagued with disease, Israel would be blessed to be a healthy nation free from plagues.

7:16-26 In order to strengthen the morale of Israel, God reminded the nation of how He worked in the past in order to bring victory to Israel. Their past victories, because of His power in them as a nation, was evidence of their victories yet to come in the future. The Canaanites perished because of their abominations, and thus, Israel must never involve herself in such abominations. If the Israelites fell into such sins, then they themselves would be driven from the land. God's point was that the occupying nations were destroyed from the land because of their abominations. This helps us understand Genesis 15:16. God did not arbitrarily remove the Canaanites from Palestine in order to make room for Israel. If this were the case, He could have done this centuries before when Abraham was in the land. Genesis 15:16 states that at the time Abraham was in the land, the iniquity of the Canaanites was not yet full. Therefore, Abraham's descendants were moved into Egypt until the iniquity of the Canaanites increased to the point of being an abomination to God. When this time came, the Canaanite nations were to be removed and the land was to be given to Israel as a possession. Israel's possession of the land, therefore, was not because of her righteousness, or because God considered her favorite over the Canaanites. Her time for possessing the land had simply come because of the abomination of the Canaanites. Now if Israel ever became an abomination to the Lord, then she would be removed from the land as were the Canaanites. Unfortunately, this is what eventually happened.

Chapter 8

8:1-10 ***So that you may live:*** Through obedience to God's commandments we are prepared to live with one another. It is necessary, therefore, that God give us commandments lest we seek to establish our own social rules after our own desires. ***He humbled you:*** God's discipline in reference to our failure to keep His commandments is an opportunity to grow in humility. When we reap what we sow, we are disciplined to bring our lives into conformity to the direction of the commandments of God. We do not despise the chastening of the Lord (Hb 12:6-11). *Manna:* Since the Israelites were made to depend totally on God during their disciplining of forty years in the wilderness, they were humbled by having to live on the same diet every day. ***Not ... by bread alone:*** Israel learned that life was not for the purpose of living for that which sustains life, but for being spiritually sustained by worship of God (See Mt 4:4; Lk 4:4). The totality of our lives must be focused on God. ***Clothing did not wear out:*** This could be what is simply stated, or that God made all provisions for them in the wilderness to have the necessary materials by which to continually replace their clothing. The literal interpretation would be a continual miracle before the people throughout their wilderness wanderings.

8:11-20 ***My power and the might of my hand:*** The industrious character of the people would eventually lead them to forget the cause of their blessings. In this way, their material prosperity would be a curse. It was God who made it possible for the land to produce for the people. However, in their diligence to work the land, they would forget that it was God who made all things grow for their prosperity. In an environment and economy of material prosperity, however, there is always the temptation to forget God. Throughout their generations, the Israelites took for granted all that they received from God, and thus prided themselves in their own accomplishments. Their allegiance which should have remained focused on God,

turned to a focus on themselves as a result of their skills to produce from the land. ***It is He who is giving you power to get wealth:*** The remedy for materialism is to remember Him from whom all blessings flow. Since Israel eventually fell by going after false gods that were created after their own imagination, their sin was that they forgot who gave them what they had. The materialist creates a god who originates from within himself, and thus, he humanistically worships his own ability to perform and produce. The humanist focuses on the ability of man to perform, but the saint focuses on God who brings power to one's efforts to work to the glory of God. When we are blessed, therefore, all glory must be given to God who gave us the gifts to produce, but also gave increase to the work of our hands. Our recognition of the fruits of our hands, therefore, is an opportunity to be grateful to God for working in our lives.

Chapter 9

9:1-6 ***Because of my righteousness:*** This is the temptation that faces every person. After they had conquered the nations that possessed the land, the Israelites would be tempted to say that they had conquered the Canaanites with their own might. They needed to remember that it was because of the grace of God who empowered each soldier of their army that they were able to conquer the Canaanites. They did not conquer the land by their own strength, nor because they were a righteous people. They were allowed to conquer the land by the power of God. They were allowed by God because of the wickedness of the Canaanites and because of the empowering might of the Lord to fulfill His promise to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Their victory over the Canaanites, because of the wickedness of the Canaanites, should be a warning to them and all nations, that when a nation gives up on God, God gives up on it (Gn 15:16). If Israel ever gave up on God, she also would be driven from the land as she drove the Canaanites from the land.

9:7-29 See Ex 32:7-29; 34:1-4. Lest Israel become arrogant in her coming conquests, she must remember how easy it was for her fathers to rebel at Mt. Sinai (Horeb) in making the golden calf (Ex 32,33). ***Tablets of stone:*** When Moses broke the tablets of stone because of the sin of the people, it was a symbol of breaking the covenant between God and Israel. The ten commandments written on the stone tablets were the conditions for the covenant. The covenant was thus broken when the conditions were broken by the people who sinned by reverting to the false gods of Egypt (See Ex 32:19). ***I will destroy them:*** Because Israel sinned at the foot of Mt. Sinai, God was willing to start a new nation from the seed of Moses. However, this plea to Moses by the people to intercede for Israel was answered by Moses as he pled for their forgiveness. Moses' intercession focused on an appeal to God's love and mercy, and His faithfulness to keep His promise to Abraham. If His promise was not kept, the Egyptians would mock the supposed "false god" of the Israelites who led them into the wilderness to die. We must keep in mind, however, that God was willing to carry out His threat. Time means nothing to God. He was willing to wait until another nation could be produced from the seed of Moses in order to settle the land of Canaan and deliver the Messiah to the world. If He had the fullness of time in mind that was stated by Paul in Galatians 4:4, then He had 1,400 more years to develop another nation before the Messiah would come into the world. It took Him about 600 years to build the nation of Israel and bring this nation to the border east of the Jordan. He had plenty of time, therefore, to do the same with another nation from Moses. God was patient concerning the fulfillment of His plan of redemption.

Chapter 10

10:1-11 ***Cut out for yourselves:*** God cut out the first tablets of stone on which the commandments were written. But after the Israelites rebelled, Moses broke the original set of stones, signifying Israel's breaking of the conditions of the covenant. After their repentance, God called on them to cut out their own tablets of stone on which He would again write the commandments. ***Ark I had made:*** This ark of wood would have been something made by Moses. The final ark was made by Bezaleel which was the permanent structure that contained the tablets when the tabernacle and its furnishings were completed (See Ex 37:1). Verses 6-9 are an historical insertion. Aaron died in Mosera, which was probably somewhere near the foot of Mt. Hor. ***At that time:*** While they were still at the foot of Mt. Sinai, Israel rebelled. But it was also while they were at Mt. Sinai that the Levites were separated from the people to be priests on behalf of the people (See Nm 3:5-37). ***The Lord is his inheritance:*** The Levites would receive no inheritance of land in Canaan, and thus were not responsible for cultivating the land. They received the Lord as their inheritance, which meant that they were to be supported by the other tribes. The Levites received cities throughout the land, and the pasture lands around the cities. The people could thus come to these cities with their offerings for the spiritual ministry that was provided by the Levites.

10:12-22 ***What does the Lord your God require of you:*** Micah also asked this question (Mc 6:8). The answer is that God requires five things: (1) We must fear God's awesome being. (2) We must obediently walk according to His will. (3) We must respond to His being with love. (4) Our lives must be one of service for His glory. (5) We must know and obey His commandments. Compliance with all that God requires results in our well-being on earth among ourselves. ***Heaven ... earth:*** When we understand that all the galaxies of the heavens to the minute particles of existence on earth originated from God, and that He is over all, then our response to Him is obedience to His will (See comments Cl 1:16-18). ***Circumcise:*** Circumcision should be the response of Israel. This circumcision was not only of the flesh, but of the heart in that the Israelites were to change their personality from being stiffnecked to being obedient (Dt 30:6). ***Love the stranger:*** This is Israel's great commission. They were to be a nation that reached out to those who were not Israelites, but had been deceived by the false religions of men. If one knows the one true and living God, it would only be natural to reach out to others who had been deceived by the false gods of men. As a

nation of priests, Israel was to be a national priesthood to the world. They were to behave as God who does not want any to perish (2 Pt 3:9). ***He is your praise:*** Because of who He is, the God of all things, He is the object of our praise. For this reason, it is absurd to create a god after one's imagination and a religion that appeals to our base desires.

Chapter 11

11:1-7 There is no separation between true love of God and obedience to His commandments (1 Jn 2:3-6; 4:7-11,19; 5:3). God loved Israel by bringing her out of bondage. God expected action on Israel's part in response to His love for giving them freedom. ***Your eyes have seen every great act of the Lord which He did:*** There were still some in Israel who were old enough to remember their experiences of the great miracles of God in delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage. Since they experienced such a miraculous deliverance, they should respond by obedience, showing an example to their children who were born in the wilderness. The nation also experienced rebellion within the camp of Israel through the efforts of Dathan and Abiram. Before the entire nation, God destroyed those who were rebellious against His authority on earth. God's judgments on the parents with such great events, therefore, should stir obedience in the lives of the children who were present at the time Moses spoke these words east of the Jordan.

11:8-12 ***So that you may be strong:*** The condition for a healthy and wealthy nation that would dwell long in the land was obedience to the commandments of God. ***Not as the land of Egypt:*** In Egypt, a desert land, they had to continually build irrigation systems from the Nile River in order to produce crops. But in Canaan there would be sufficient natural rain where they would not have to work additionally to grow crops by the construction of irrigation systems. They had moved from a desert region that had to be irrigated from the Nile River to a region that had natural rainfall.

11:13-17 ***He will shut up heaven:*** If they were disobedient to the will of God, then God would use drought to motivate repentance. Their obedience would bring the continual blessing of the early and latter rains, but God would bring drought upon the land if they ignored His commandments (See Js 5:17,18).

11:18-21 This section emphasizes the responsibility of parents in reference to teaching their children the word of God. In order to guarantee that this generation of children not fall away from the commandments of God, the parents were to continually teach their children. It was the responsibility of the parents, not the Levites, to teach the children. As the parents were not to turn their responsibility of teaching their children the Bible over to the Levites, neither are Christians to turn their children over to others for the major part of their learning of the Bible. The Israelite children occasionally learned from the Levites when the parents took offerings for fellowship meals to the Levites in the cities, but on the farms the parents were to be educating continually their children in the word of God.

11:22-32 When Israel came into the land, a national pledge was to be made. This pledge to be obedient to the commandments of God was not only a national commitment to the will of God for the generation that made it, but also a pledge for all generations that would follow throughout the history of Israel. ***Mt. Gerizim:*** From Gerizim the blessings of the covenant were to be read. ***Mt. Ebal:*** From Ebal the cursings of God were to be read (See 27:11-26). These were the cursings they would experience if they became disobedient to the commandments of God. The blessings and cursings would reemphasize the principle that is taught throughout these words. If they remained faithful, they would be blessed. If they forsook the will of God, they would be cursed, and eventually driven from the land of promise, which thing eventually happened in their future.

Chapter 12
WORSHIP AND HOLY LIVING

12:1-32 ***High mountains ... hills:*** Because the Canaanites thought that they were closer to their god on high mountains and hills, there they established their places of worship. ***Green tree:*** The Canaanites also established groves of trees as places of worship. The Israelites did not destroy these groves when they entered the land, and thus they became a snare to Israel (See Jr 2:20; Ez 18:6; Hs 4:13). ***You will not act like this toward the Lord your God:*** Israel was not to build shrines, plant groves or make idols in reference to their worship of God. Once one either builds a temple or carves an idol to his god, he has either located his god in some place or sculptured him after one's imagination. What made Israel different from the nations around them was that they were to make no images of God, neither build any temples in which to locate Him. Unfortunately, all such things they eventually did because of the influence of the people around them and because they did not completely banish the Canaanites from the land. ***The place:*** We must keep in mind that it is not stated that "the place" would be in a permanent location. The place was probably revealed annually by God to be in the area of a different tribe. The place would be moved every year in order to show no favoritism among the tribes, for God is not a respecter of persons. What is commanded in this context is an annual tribal reunion in order to promote continued unity in Israel. God knew that when the tribes settled in their particular areas they would have the tendency to estrange themselves from one another. He thus stated that He would establish a place annually among the tribal territories where they would bring their offerings. The men of the nation were to appear there three times a year at the Passover, Pentecost and the feast of Tabernacles (See Ex 23:14-17; 34:18-23). The primary purpose for this tribal reunion was to maintain unity in the nation. However, we cannot help but interpret that God was here also laying the foundation for world evangelism in the future after the coming of the Messiah. God knew that they would eventually sin. Because of their sin of rebellion He would scatter them throughout the world by the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. However, a remnant would return to the land after seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Nevertheless, a portion of the Israelites would remain scattered throughout the world.

Representatives of these scattered Israelites came to Jerusalem every year for Passover and Pentecost (See At 2:5-13). At the Pentecost of A.D. 30, Peter preached the death and resurrection of the crucified Messiah, the Son of God (At 2:36). When this message was initially taken back to the other Israelites from where these initial pilgrims had come, they encouraged their friends and family to go to "the place" (Jerusalem) where they had heard the message of the gospel. This was the prophecy of Isaiah 2:1-4. The gospel would subsequently go into all the world as a result of these visitors coming to Jerusalem on an annual basis for every Passover and Pentecost, where they would learn at the apostles' feet, and then return throughout the world from where they had come. In these commands in reference to coming to "the place," God established an annual event in Israel that would become the foundation upon which world evangelism would be accomplished 1,400 years from the time of these events. ***For His habitation:*** All that God was commanding here was the place where the offerings were to take place, not the construction of a facility, as the temple. In this context it would seem contradictory for God to give instructions concerning the total destruction of all places that were used as worship by the Canaanites, and at the same time give instructions that the Israelites were to construct their own place of worship. The only thing that we could assume that would be built at the place was an altar upon which the burnt offerings were to be made. But the building of an elaborate sanctuary in place of the tabernacle is stated nowhere in this context. Since the tabernacle was to be a mobile sanctuary that could and would be moved among the tribal territories in order to maintain the work of the priests among all the tribes, no official permanent sanctuary was to be built. Only the place where the reunion would occur would be revealed by God on an annual basis. The movement of the tabernacle, for which there was given great detail in its construction, was to manifest that God was not showing favoritism to any one tribe. It is obvious that the details for construction and movement of the tabernacle were not for the purpose of its existence for only the 38 years of their wilderness wandering. The instructions concerning the tabernacle were given on the basis that it be used and moved throughout their history until the Messiah came. And it was used in such a manner for about 400 years before David initiated the idea that a permanent sanctuary be built in Jerusalem in the place of the tabernacle. The temple was thus allowed by God to be built, as He allowed the Israelites to establish a king over themselves as the nations around them. Its construction was a concession, not a commandment. ***If the place ... is too far:*** If the place for the annual offerings was in the tribal area of an extreme southern or northern area, then they could kill and eat their offerings at the gates of villages near to them. The fact that God uses "if" in reference to the place indicates that the establishment of the place would be different on each occasion it was established (see 14:24). At times the place would be far, but on other occasions, it would be close. And since the place was to be different each year, it would not be too far for some of the people all the time. It is for this reason that reference to "the place" should not be used to assume that God intended to build permanently a sanctuary in one location that would marginalize some of the people to always be too far away. What they eventually did was to do what God did not intend. They built a permanent structure that was always too far away for the northern tribes. Many years after these statements, Jeroboam in his rebellion, after the construction of the temple in Jerusalem by his father, Solomon, established places of offering in Bethel and Dan. He did this because the building of the temple in Jerusalem consigned the northern tribes to be far from the permanent place of offering in Jerusalem (See 1 Kg 12:25-33). Jeroboam would have never had a reason for establishing these places of sacrifice if the annual movement of the tabernacle had continued throughout the tribal territories. But the building of the temple in one place excluded others, as all permanent purpose-built sanctuaries do. ***The nations which you go to dispossess:*** When considering earlier statements in reference to the Canaanites, this statement would mean that Israel was to destroy the Canaanites. In view of what is said here, it seems that God may have given an option to the Canaanites. They could live by allowing Israel to dispossess them from the land of Palestine. If they did not migrate to another land, then they were to be completely destroyed. They were thus given the choice of fighting against God in His will to bring Israel into the land, or they could flee from Israel to other lands and live. But if they refused to flee, they were to be destroyed. God knew they would not flee, and thus, He gave Israel the command to completely destroy them. ***Their sons and their daughters they have burned:*** The Canaanites had digressed to the moral low of offering their children in sacrifice to their false gods. Therefore, before we would make a moral judgment of God's command to destroy completely the Canaanites, we must keep this fact in mind. The Canaanites were in a state of self-destruction when Israel arrived at the Jordan with God's command to annihilate them. If they were not completely destroyed, their self-destructive culture would infest Israel, and thus lead them astray from the will of God.

Chapter 13

13:1-5 ***If there arises among you a prophet:*** This is the first of three cases of apostasy that are mentioned in this chapter. This first case would be a false prophet who would give what would appear to be a sign or make a prediction that would appear to be a fulfilled prophecy. Since he would be a false prophet because he did not speak according to the will of God, then his signs and predictions would be false (See 1 Kg 22:6-8,20-23; Jr 6:13; 28:1-17). God allows no false prophet to command the power of the supernatural, neither does He allow such to see the future. ***God is testing you:*** God permitted such false prophets to exist in order to test the people to see if they would follow His commands. For this reason, preaching the commands of God, His word, is the first test as to whether a prophet is true or false. A prophet would pass the test of being a true prophet, not on the basis of a sign or prophecy of a future event, but on the basis of whether he was speaking according to the word of God (See Is 8:19,20). Any preacher, therefore, who would presume to be a representative

for God should first be judged on the basis of his speaking according to the word of God, not by his performances. One can determine if a miracle is true or false based on whether the one who performed the supposed miracle is preaching the truth. ***Put to death:*** God was serious about men rising up to draw people away after themselves (Compare At 20:29,30). Since God is this serious about false prophets leading His people astray, then His people should be vigilant about not listening to those who would presume to be prophets, but whose works and predictions are false.

13:6-11 ***If your brother ... mother ... son ... daughter ... wife ... friend entice you:*** The first temptation to apostasy was through an individual who would assume authority and presume to speak from God. This second temptation referred to a close family member or a dear friend, as in the case when Eve enticed Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit (See 1 Tm 2:14). ***You will stone him:*** It is better to stone a loved one without pity than to endanger one's soul of suffering the fire of hell. Countless warnings are given by God in this book not to succumb to false religions (See Dt 6:14; 7:1-5; 12:2,3; 20:15-18). If one thus yields to a false religion, then certainly there could be no mercy in Israel for that person. Justifying false religiosity with the notion that one is a good person betrays the word of God to which all will give account in the day of judgment (See Jn 12:48). These instructions concerning those who would cause apostasy must be taken very seriously. Immediate judgment was to be handed down to Israel when a false prophet was revealed. God will condemn to eternal death those who lead people away to other gods (Mt 7:21-23; compare Mt 10:34-39; Lk 14:25-35). In the seriousness of this text, however, we must be cautious about claiming someone to be a false prophet. A false prophet in the context of these statements was one who denied the one true and living God and supposedly worked miraculous deeds or sought to tell the future to substantiate his claims. The false prophet in Israel was attempting to lead the people away from God in order to serve idol gods.

13:12-18 ***Wicked men have gone out:*** Some translations read, "children of Belial." Belial refers to one who is worthless in word and action. The apostasy in this case would be the work of one with a worthless character who seeks to lead others to embrace a religious immorality that appeals to the base character of man. In modern terms this would be satanism and occultism that often lure people to perform those rites that appeal to and excite the lusts of the flesh. ***Inquire ... search ... ask:*** Before the condemnation of anyone who would be a "wicked man" who leads others astray, every effort must be made to find the truth about what was being taught. Even the truth about the "children of Belial" must be understood and confirmed before any action of judgment was to be measured out. No gossip or hearsay was to be accepted. ***Condemned things:*** These were the accursed things, things that were doomed to destruction as the city of Jericho (Ja 6; compare Jg 20:38,48). The extremity of the judgment was for the purpose of putting evil away from Israel, causing fear in the hearts of the faithful, and to hold back the judgment of God upon the nation. This chapter concludes with stern judgment that would come upon those who forsake the word of God. It would be just to say that God's people must be in fear of forsaking the word of God, or distorting it in any way that would lead to immoral behavior on the part of God's people.

Chapter 14

14:1-21 See Lv 11:2-45. ***His own possession:*** Because Israel was a nation that was chosen from among the nations, she was not to identify herself in behavior with any of the false religions of the nations. Israel's choosing by God necessitated her uniqueness, and thus her refusal to eat any abominable thing. The listing of animals that is given here certainly had behind it good dietary principles that would guard the Israelites from eating anything that would harm them. We would not conclude that God arbitrarily selected certain animals to be unclean. By eating only that which God commanded, Israel manifested her obedience to His will, though she did not understand the reasons for the restrictions. We would also conclude that the selected foods for their consumption separated them from the nations around them who indulged in every food, but specifically certain foods that were eaten in honor of idol gods. It is for this reason that these restrictions do not apply to Christians (See Mk 7:19; Rm 14:14; 1 Tm 4:4). Christians are not to be known for what they eat, but for the love they manifest (Jn 13:34,35). They are free to eat all foods. ***Not boil a kid in its mother's milk:*** Some have suggested that boiling a young goat in the mother's milk was a practice of the Canaanites that manifested the base immoral principle of the people, for the Canaanites offered their own children in sacrifice to their pagan gods.

14:22-29 ***Eat before the Lord:*** The tithe (one tenth) of the fruits and livestock was to be eaten as a meal before the Lord with the Levites. In this way there was always food for the Levites who were given no inheritance of land (See Nm 18:21-24). ***End of three years:*** This tithe was to be placed in storage for the Levite families, foreigners, orphans and widows to eat in between the tithe at the end of the harvest. The tithe of the crops and livestock was seasonal, and thus the tithe that was put in storage every three years lasted the Levites in between the harvest and the seasonal giving of the newborn of the livestock. In all of God's laws concerning food, provision was made for the Levites, the poor, widows and foreigners.

Chapter 15

15:1-11 See Lv 25:1-7. ***Grant a remission:*** Every seven years, debt was forgiven and the land was laid to rest (See Ex 23:11). Some have interpreted the forgiveness of debt here to mean that during the seventh year the creditor could not force payment from a debtor. However, most Bible students interpret the law here to refer to the total forgiveness of the debt. ***Foreign:*** This is not the alien, but one who was not an Israelite of a neighboring country with whom an Israelite had commercial dealings. The alien (stranger) was one who took up residence in Israel, and subsequently assumed obedience to the law of God, but had no inheritance of the land. ***No poor among you:*** There would be no poor in the sense that provision to work for food would always be made available for

the poor. Laws concerning gleaning and forgiveness of debt made it possible for the poor to always have food if they were willing to work, and to borrow from their brother if they fell under hard times. ***Lend to many nations:*** If they remained obedient to the will of God, the land would prosper to the point that other nations would come to them for food. They would thus have no poor in the sense that everyone who would work would be able to sustain themselves from the land. ***The poor will never cease:*** There would always be the opportunity to help others. Therefore, one's heart should never become calloused against the poor. We assume that these poor are such, not because they were lazy, but because of unfortunate circumstances that brought them to a state of poverty. It is the responsibility of society to help those who cannot sustain themselves because of the lack of opportunity.

15:12-18 ***Sold to you:*** This was not the slavery of the nations around Israel, or the slavery they experienced in Egypt. The interpretation here is that one could sell himself to another for labor in order to pay for a debt (See Ex 21:1-6). Unlike the slavery of the nations around Israel, this was a willing bondservant who gave himself for the service of another in order to repay his debt. From the time the service began, in the seventh year the bondservant was free from his or her debt. If when the six years of service were completed, and the bondservant wanted to remain, he or she had to make a statement of commitment to his or her master. The piercing of the ear at the door of the master was a lifetime commitment to the master.

15:19-23 The offering of the firstborn was to be the best of the livestock. The Lord deserved only the best, and thus if a firstborn had a blemish, it could not be offered to the Lord. ***Eat it before the Lord:*** These offerings were to be eaten by those who gave them. They were to be eaten with the priests, and thus this fellowship meal kept the people at the table of the spiritual leaders of Israel. We must not miss the significance of these offerings. They were not legal commands that were given simply to test the obedience of Israel. There was purpose behind every offering. The purpose was to bring households together in the company of the spiritual leaders. In this company spiritual matters could be discussed, and teaching carried out by the priests. The teaching was carried out during a common meal between those who brought the offering and the teachers, the priests.

Chapter 16

When Israel was settled in the land, they were to celebrate the feasts that are described in this chapter (See also Ex 12:1-20; 16:14-17; 34:13-23; Lv 23:1-44; Nm 28:16 – 29:40).

16:1-8 ***The Passover:*** The Passover was to be observed in the month of Abib, which after the Babylonian captivity was called Nisan. This is March/April according to our present calendar. Passover was the independence day for Israel. The feast celebrated their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. ***Unleavened bread:*** This was the bread that reminded them of their affliction while in slavery in Egypt. It also reminded them of the haste by which they left the land, for there was no time for leaven to rise in normal bread. For the Passover, unleavened bread was to be eaten for seven days, the last day being a day for a solemn assembly. ***The place:*** As the location was different each year, they would assemble where the tabernacle was placed in order to celebrate as a nation their deliverance from Egyptian captivity.

16:9-12 See Ex 34:22; Lv 23:15-21. ***The feast of weeks:*** This feast was for seven consecutive weeks, beginning at the time of the harvest (Lv 23:4-11). This was to be a period of great rejoicing as they witnessed their harvest for the year and remembered the blessings of God. They were also to remember their bondage in Egypt from which they were delivered.

16:13-17 See Lv 23:33-43. ***Feast of the tabernacles:*** This feast came at the end of the harvests. This was a feast of rejoicing over the harvest and thanksgiving for the great blessings of God in the harvest. ***Three times in a year:*** The purpose of the men appearing before the Lord was to maintain unity of the nation. God knew that if they did not do this, they would eventually become a divided people. Coming together for specific feasts, therefore, promoted an opportunity for national communication. ***Not ... empty-handed:*** The feasts were times when fellowship meals were eaten. Everyone, therefore, was to bring food (offerings) to be eaten by everyone during the meeting. If one did not bring an offering, then he was not manifesting fellowship toward others (See comments 2 Co 8:4).

16:18-22 ***Appoint judges and officers:*** We are not told how this was carried out, but the Israelites were to select those who would work in making decisions in matters of dispute (See 1:13-15). Gates: The place of judgments was at the gates of the cities where the judges and officers met. ***Not ... take a bribe:*** Bribes corrupt decisions. When bribes are taken, judgments are twisted and favoritism is shown. There is no justice in a system that is controlled by bribes. ***Tree ... altar ... image:*** If anyone looked toward these with any religious emotions or connotations, then he violated commandments that were against idolatry. The Israelites were to make nothing that became a religious symbol. There were to be in Israel no fetishes or icons to stimulate religious emotions of any kind. All such reminders of imagined spirits were to be cast out.

Chapter 17

17:1-7 ***Blemish ... defect:*** No animal that had a blemish or defect was to be used as an offering (See 15:19-23). Only the best was to be brought before the Lord. Since the offerings were to be eaten by the Levites and the people who brought the offering, then it is reasonable that God would command them not to eat a sickly animal. ***Two ... three witnesses:*** No gossip was to be used as evidence to convict one of idolatrous worship. Since such worship carried with it the penalty of death, then the accused must be faced by at least two witnesses who could confirm the accusations (Compare 1 Tm 5:19). In the case of the theocratic society of Israel, idolatry was treason. It was rebellion against the rule of God through His commandments, and thus subject to capital punishment.

17:8-13 Difficult cases for judgment were to be taken before the priests at the tabernacle. ***Blood and blood:*** Cases of murder. ***Plea and plea:*** Cases of civil actions. ***Stroke and stroke:*** Cases in reference to personal assault.

17:14-20 ***I will set a king over me:*** Israel was to be a theocracy that was ruled by God as the sole monarch. He would rule through the law of commandments that were given on Mt. Sinai. However, God knew that the international social pressure of the nations around Israel would bear upon them. Their desire to be as the nations around them would drive them to seek for a king among themselves. Their appointment of a king, therefore, would be a concession by God. It is interesting to know that for almost 400 years they existed as a nation without a king, thus proving that God's original plan worked. Only when they began the process of falling away did they seek for a king on earth. ***God will choose:*** The king that they would desire must first be chosen by God. Such was the case when God anointed those whom He chose to be kings in Israel (See 1 Sm 10:24; 16:11-13; 2 Sm 5:1-3; 2 Kg 9:1-13).

Chapter 18

18:1-8 ***The Lord is their inheritance:*** The tribe of Levi was appointed by God to work as the spiritual servants for the nation of Israel. For this reason they were given no portion of land, though they were given 48 cities throughout Canaan. Because the Levites had no land to cultivate for their food, it was the responsibility of the rest of Israel to provide for them through their offerings. ***The priest's portion:*** There is a difference here from the portions that were allotted in Leviticus 7:30-34. The reason for this is that in view of Moses' departure from Israel as the mediator between God and Israel, the original covenant mandates that were given at Mt. Sinai are here updated for the people as they settle in the land. ***A Levite:*** A similar portion was assigned to any Levite who chose to come and serve at the Lord's altar. What was provided for him was beside what he might profit from the sale of his personal property. He was thus not to support himself in his service at the Lord's altar, but was to partake of the offerings of the people (Compare 1 Co 9:8-18).

18:9-14 ***You will not ... imitate the abominations*:** They were not to follow the culture of the Canaanites. This included the religious culture of using one's children for sacrifices in fire (See 12:29-31). Since the mind of man was created by God to be able to go to extremes in imagination, they were not to obsess in their imaginations about things beyond this world. They were not to conjure up fictitious spirits by exciting the emotions of people. Sobriety and rationality should be characteristic of those who seek to guide their thoughts and imaginations by the written word of God.

18:15-22 ***A Prophet ... like unto me:*** Moses here spoke first of a succession of prophets who would be God's spokesmen to His people. And such God did throughout their history when they forsook the commandments of God (See 1 Sm 11:14 – 12:25; 1 Kg 18:19-39). In this context, however, we know that Moses also referred to the Prophet who would be God's final prophet to His people (see Dt 34:10). This Prophet would be the Messiah of which Moses was a type. From this statement, Israel looked for this unique Prophet throughout their history (See Jn 1:21; 7:40). This Prophet was Jesus, the final prophet through whom God revealed His will to man (At 3:22,23; Hb 1:3). ***The thing does not follow:*** The sure proof of a false prophet was in the fact that what he prophesied did not come to pass. Combine this with the fact that if a prophet did not speak the truth, but tried to lead the people after false gods, then that prophet was truly false (Dt 13:1-5). Any supposed prophet, therefore, who would not speak according to the word of God, and would speak of things in the future that eventually did not come to pass, was a false prophet. That prophet was not to be followed.

Chapter 19

19:1-14 See Nm 35:9-34; Ja 20:1-9. ***The manslayer:*** This was the one who unintentionally killed someone. Since the primitive laws of Israel's day gave a right to the next of kin to carry out judgment upon the one who killed their kinsman, in Israel's case of culpable homicide, one could flee to one of six refuge cities (Ex 21:13; Nm 35:9-29). There were three refuge cities on the east side of the Jordan and three on the west side. The purpose of the refuge city law was to prevent unjust revenge on one who accidentally killed another person. ***If any man hates his neighbor:*** If because of hate someone murdered another person, then the law of the refuge cities did not apply. The person was to be judged by the elders of his own city. ***Neighbor's landmark:*** The land was a source of survival. It was a family's inheritance for the future. For this reason, no landmarks, which were usually written on stone, were to be moved once the inheritance of land was allotted and established.

19:15-21 ***Two witnesses:*** In 17:6 those who were charged in capital offenses had to be found guilty at the mouth of no less than two witnesses. In this context reference is to accusations concerning any iniquity or sin. ***False witness:*** This law was given in order to discourage perjury. If after investigation one was found to be a false witness, then he was to suffer the punishment he wished to be inflicted on the one against whom he bore false witness. This law made accusers think twice before slanderously accusing one of a deed for which he had no evidence.

Chapter 20

20:1-9 ***When you go out to battle:*** Our interpretation of the statements of this context must be based on the eternal plan of redemption of God through the nation of Israel. Israel was separated from the nations of the world for the purpose of preserving a portion of world society through which God would bring the Redeemer of all men into the world. This purpose for the existence of Israel, therefore, made it necessary that Israel be preserved in a land of her own, which land must be freed from all evil cultures that would lure Israel into becoming like the nations around her. Throughout her history, she would also have to defend herself from any invading armies that might bring the nation to an end. In this context, therefore, God made a promise that He would fight for the nation of Israel against all who would seek to destroy His eternal purpose for the nation. For this reason, He was a God of war in reference to defending Israel (Ex 15:3; see Ja 6:17-19; 1 Sm 30:7; 2 Ch 13:12; Hs 1:7). God fought for Israel to bring her into existence and into the land of promise (See Dt 6:18,19;

7:1,2,16-26; 9:1-6; 11:22-25; 12:29; 19:1; 31:3-8). ***Out of the land of Egypt:*** The men of the army of Israel were to keep fresh in their memories the fact that with a strong arm God divided the Red Sea and brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage. In selecting those who would go to war, the leaders were thus to seek out only those who were of a strong heart with a strong faith in the fact that God would go to war with them.

20:10-20 ***Cities that are very far off from you:*** These were not cities of the Canaanites. They were to be offered the option of peace and becoming tributaries to Israel. If they refused, every male in the cities was to be killed. ***Cities of these people:*** These were the cities of the Canaanites. They were to be made no offer of peace, but were to be eradicated from the land of Canaan lest they endanger the moral preservation of Israel (See 7:1-6). ***Trees:*** All fruit trees were to be preserved. Only those trees that bore no fruit could be cut down in order to be used in besieging a city.

Chapter 21

21:1-9 ***Found slain lying in a field:*** This would be an unknown murder for which an offering had to be made for the nation. The murderer was unknown, and thus the people's responsibility was to find an open valley nearest to the city where the body was found. There a heifer that had never been worked in the field was to be offered. In this offering the people as a whole were declared to be innocent of the murder. In this matter the elders of the city functioned as a council to prepare the sacrifice, and the priests, the sons of Levi, would make final judgments and carry out the sacrifice (See 1:9-17; 16:18-20; Ex 18:13-26).

21:10-14 ***A beautiful woman:*** This would have been a woman from another nation (20:14,15), but not a Canaanite, for the Israelites were not to marry any Canaanite (7:3). ***Shave her head and trim her nails:*** This was a ceremony to manifest her total separation from the pagan gods and practices of the nation from which she came. ***Mourn:*** In order to show respect to the woman, she was allowed to mourn her parents for a month (See Nm 20:29). ***Have no delight:*** If the husband came to the point of having no care for the woman, he could not simply discard the woman to slavery. She had been exalted above her captive state, and thus was to be considered with the rights of the Israelite women. In this case divorce was tolerated in putting away the woman.

21:15-17 Polygamy is here tolerated in unique cases, but does not establish the law of God in reference to all domestic relationships (See Mt 19:8). Polygamous marriages are full of strife and jealousy, and for this reason polygamy should always be shunned. ***Unloved:*** In polygamist marriages, there are always those who are loved less. If the one who is loved less gave birth to the firstborn, the firstborn still had all the rights of the firstborn, regardless of the fact that the mother was loved less than the other wife (Compare Gn 48:22; 2 Kg 2:9).

21:18-23 ***Rebellious son:*** If a son could not be controlled by the parents, then it became the responsibility of the elders of the city to deal with the son. If the son was found to be stubborn and rebellious, it was the responsibility of the men of the city to execute the judgment of stoning the son to death. The rebellion of the son would be defined by the son's act of idolatry, or the committing of murder, or an adulterous relationship with another. All such crimes were punishable by stoning (see 22:20-27). The son could not be stoned simply because he was stubborn and rebellious. He had to have manifested his rebellion in committing an offense that was to receive capital punishment. ***Accursed of God:*** Death by hanging on a tree exposed the body of the one executed, and thus carried with it the curse of God (Nm 25:4; 2 Sm 4:12). In this way Jesus was cursed by being hanged on the tree of the cross for our sins (See Jn 19:31; Gl 3:13). Because of this sentiment, many Jews believed Jesus was a cursed man.

Chapter 22

22:1-12 These instructions deal with the very fibre of community. In loving one's neighbor as himself, one must look out for his neighbor's property. Even if one does not get along with his neighbor, he still has a responsibility to protect his neighbor's property. Failure to do such signals the downfall of society and opens the door for common thieves among neighbors. ***Woman's clothing:*** Anything that would blur the distinction between males and females was to be shunned in a society that sought to maintain righteousness before God. It is not said what determined either a man or woman's clothing. But if the clothing was identified by society to reflect the status of either a man or woman, then men and women should shun the parading themselves as the opposite sex. The prohibition here is against the one who is seeking to pose either himself or herself as the opposite sex. ***Parapet***: This would be a battlement or railing to prevent someone from falling off a roof. ***Woven together:*** These laws, though they may seem frivolous to us, are given on the background of the Canaanite culture which Israel was to destroy from the land. The mixing of fibers in garments was probably a reference to Canaanite garments that were worn in respect of certain baals.

22:13-30 ***Evidence of the damsel's virginity:*** This was the bloodstained linens on which the man and woman had sexual intercourse the night of the wedding when the wedding was consummated. This was evidence that the woman was a virgin at the time of the wedding. The linen was kept by the father of the bride. If a husband sought to put away the wife that he had married because of passion, claiming that she was not a virgin at the time of the wedding, then the father could produce the evidence of the bloodstained linen. If she was proved to be a virgin, then the accusing husband would be punished, fined and could not put the wife away. If the woman was found to be guilty of immorality previous to the marriage, she was to be stoned at her father's house for she had brought disgrace on her father's house. ***A man is found lying with a woman married to a husband:*** In the case of adultery, both the man and woman were to be stoned. ***Engaged to a husband:*** Betrothal of a virgin to a man was as if she already had the man as a husband, for the bride price had already been paid (Compare Mt 1:20). ***She did not cry out:*** The evidence of the rape would have been the crying out of the woman in the city. If she did not cry out, then she was not raped but willingly committed

fornication. ***In the field:*** If the fornication took place in the field, the cries of the woman could not be heard. Therefore, only the rapist was to be stoned. ***His father's wife:*** See 2 Sm 3:7; 16:22; 1 Kg 2:22; Ez 22:10.

Chapter 23

23:1-8 ***Assembly of the Lord:*** The males were to assemble before the Lord every year on Passover, Pentecost and the feast of Tabernacles. However, there were certain people who were to be excluded from the assembly of the Lord unto the tenth generation. Emasculation was the first reason for exclusion from the assembly because such mutilations of the body were often associated with Canaanite worship. An illegitimate person, or bastard, was also to be excluded from the assembly unto the tenth generation. Because of their hostile treatment of Israel at the time of their entrance into the land of Canaan, the Ammonite and Moabite were also to be excluded (See Is 21:14). The principle of these exclusions is based on the fact that God seeks conviction in His covenant with His people (Dt 18:13). ***The Edomite ... Egyptian:*** Exclusion extended to the Edomites and Egyptians only to the second generation. The Edomites were relatives to Israel (Gn 36:1) and the Egyptians preserved the nation of Israel for 400 years in their land (Gn 42). After the exclusion period to either the second or tenth generation, those who were excluded had to profess the covenant and laws of God that were the conditions upon which the covenant was based.

23:9-14 As a traveling camp of people who were making war against the Canaanites, God wanted to keep the camp of Israel sanitary (See Lv 15:16,17). For this reason laws were given here to keep the camp clean and prevent any nakedness among the people in the camp. They were thus to carry out the toiletries necessities of life outside the camp.

23:15-25 Holiness and righteousness were to characterize the camp of Israel. No immorality was to be found in the camp. ***The dog:*** The male prostitute. ***Interest:*** They were not to take financial advantage of one who had fallen on hard times (Ex 22:25; see Lv 25:35-37). ***Out of your lips:*** There were no written documents in Israel, and thus when a person spoke something, he or she was to be good for his or her word. ***In your vessel:*** When traveling, one could eat from the fields of others, but he could not harvest any fruits by putting extra into a vessel. Since the males were to appear three times before the Lord every year, there would always be those who would travel great distances to the place that the Lord had designated for the meeting of the Passover. The sojourners had to eat along the way from the fields of others because they could not carry with them sufficient food for such a long journey (Compare Mk 2:24).

Chapter 24

24:1-5 The laws that God here gives in reference to divorce is to restrict their putting away of their mates for any reason, which seemed to be a common practice at the time. God hates divorce, and thus is not here encouraging divorce by these laws, but is restricting those who seek divorce for any reason (See Ml 2:14,16). These restrictions are based on the fact that some had hastily divorced their wives. ***Some uncleanness:*** Adultery, which was punishable by death (22:20,21), is not here indicated. Reference is probably to indecent behavior on the part of the wife. ***Bill of divorcement:*** The legal procedure was that the wife was to be officially divorced by the husband by giving her this statement that dissolved the marriage. If a woman was divorced twice, or divorced once and then became a widow, the first husband could not remarry her, for she had become defiled. God's original plan was one man for one woman (See comments Mt 19:7-9).

24:6-22 There are various laws given here that are necessary for normal social behavior. There are some principles that must be highlighted in reference to the poor. Nothing was to be taken as security for a loan from a poor person that would endanger his life. Therefore, the upper or the lower of the two millstones that were used for grinding grain was not to be taken as security for a loan for this would be destroying the livelihood of a person. If an outer garment for warmth was taken for security, it could not be kept overnight (See Ex 22:26,27; Am 2:8). The choice as to what was to be pledged was determined by the lender. In this context it is interesting to note that one is not simply to seek out the poor in order to help them. One is to make it easy in society for the poor to survive. For this reason no field, olive tree or vineyard was to be completely stripped of its produce during harvest. Something was always to be left for the poor who on their own would harvest for themselves. ***Kidnapping:*** The laws of God for Israel placed a great value on human life. Under the judgment of capital punishment, no one was to kidnap another. ***Leprosy:*** This term is used in Scripture to refer to various kinds of skin disease, though it is often used to report the serious disease of leprosy which was a decaying of the flesh. Because some leprosy was contagious, the Israelites were to obey all laws in reference to it (See Lv 13 – 14). ***Put to death for his own sin:*** This law enforces social accountability. The family would not be punished for the sin of one member of the family. This was a law that was common in many societies. But in Israel, the one who sinned was the one who paid the price for the sin (See 2 Kg 14:6; Jr 31:29,30; Ez 18:19,20).

Chapter 25

25:1-4 Because there were no prisons in Israel, special laws were given to protect those who were accused of crimes. All cases were to be brought before a judge or judges. Any particular case was to be tried before a judge and before the face of the accused. ***According to his guilt:*** This was a very important concept that was often stated in the phrase, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The judgment was to match the crime in that no criminal was to be punished with excessive stripes. This was a safeguard against punishment that might be carried out in the heat of the moment or by an angry crowd. ***Forty stripes:*** The punishment was never to exceed 40 stripes. The Israelites were so cautious about this that they would administer only 39 stripes just to make sure they did not go over the number allotted for punishment (See 2 Co 11:24). By administering just judgment, the humanity of the offender was maintained. Israel was reminded that re-

gardless of one's sin, the offender was still a fellow Israelite. ***Not muzzle:*** Respect for life and kindness to all people were foundational principles of the law of God for Israel (See 1 Co 9:9,10). Greed must never be allowed to marginalize the poor of any society. The poor will always be in every society, but society as a whole must always seek to help the poor in some way.

25:5-10 ***Her husband's brother:*** The levirate law, or marriage, was a principle law of the ancient world. This law dated back to before the days of Abraham. The law is mentioned in the Code of Hammurabi, a king of the city of Babylon who reigned around 2000 B.C. The law was based on preventing a family name from becoming extinct (See Rt 4:5,10; 1 Sm 24:21; 2 Sm 14:7). In reference to Israel, the allotted land that was given to a family by God as an inheritance was not to be lost from the family. The principle of the levirate law that is explained in this context is based on this principle. When a childless widow brought forth children from the brother of her dead husband, the family inheritance was continued. The dead brother's brother had no claim to the family inheritance. The inheritance, therefore, would stay within the family of the dead brother and not be passed on to another family who was not of the genealogy of the wife or dead husband. The incorporation of this law for Israel illustrates that various laws of society that dated back for centuries were applied to Israel by God in the writing of the law for Israel. Some of the laws were not new to Israel. They were simply reinstated by Moses in order that Israel continue with those laws that could have been originally given through the mouth of prophets through whom God spoke before the giving of the law to Israel (See comments Hb 1:1). ***If brethren dwell together:*** The condition for the application of the levirate law was that the extended family had to be living together. Also, the widow of the dead brother had to be childless. ***Firstborn:*** Only the firstborn was to take the name of the dead father. ***If the man does not desire to take his brother's wife:*** The living brother could refuse to take the widow of his dead brother. But such was considered a dereliction of one's family responsibilities. If such were the case, the elders of the city had to be informed. If the man could not be persuaded to assume his levirate duties, then he had to symbolically manifest such before the elders of the city (See Rt 4).

25:11,12 ***By the genitals:*** This act on the part of the woman was an act against the posterity of a family through procreation. Her action, therefore, which is mentioned in the context of the levirate law, is an endangering action against the covenant rights of another man. Her action was to be dealt with harshly.

25:13-16 ***Differing weights:*** Corruption in society in the matter of buying and selling was a signal of the death of a society. Here the consumer was protected in that the seller was never to have dishonest measuring weights in his possession (See 2 Sm 14:26; Am 8:5).

25:17-19 ***Amalek:*** The Amalekites had taken advantage of the Israelites when they initially came out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 17:8-16). Because of this deplorable action on the part of the Amalekites in attacking the straggling weak of the nation of Israel on their way to Mt. Sinai, they signed their doom from history (1 Sm 15:2).

Chapter 26

26:1-11 The offering of the firstfruits and the tithes acknowledged God as the one who blessed them with all things. ***Firstfruits:*** See Nm 18:12,13; Dt 18:4. With the offering of the firstfruits, they were to declare that the promise of God's covenant had been fulfilled. They also declared the great deliverances by which God brought them into the land. ***Arameean:*** Jacob is described as an Aramean, or Syrian, because his mother was from Aram Naharaim of Mesopotamia (Gn 24:10; Hs 12:12). He also lived many years in the house of Laban in Aramea (Gn 29 – 31). ***Rejoice in every good thing:*** After the ceremonies of bringing in the firstfruits, they were to join in a fellowship meal with the Levites and aliens who had joined themselves to Israel. ***Aliens:*** These were those who were converted to the God of Israel, and subsequently lived according to His laws. Throughout the laws given to Israel, the alien, or foreigner, is included to emphasize the fact that Israel was a nation of priests to the world. Though the Levites were a tribe of priests for Israel, the entire nation was to be "evangelistic" in the sense of reaching out to other nations concerning the commandments they had received from the one true and living God. They were thus to bring others into the hope of Israel for the coming Messiah.

26:12-15 ***The tithes:*** In the first and second years, the tithes were to be used for the feasts (14:22-27). The third tithe was to be given to the Levites and the poor (14:28,29). The worshiper must then proclaim before the Lord at the tabernacle that he had fulfilled the duties of the tithe (14:23; 15:20). Tithes were for the purpose of fully supporting the priests and Levites (Nm 18:21-32). Since the priests and Levites functioned on behalf of the people to serve the spiritual needs of the people and to maintain their focus on God, God instituted that they be fully supported on behalf of Israel.

26:16-19 ***Statutes ... commandments ... judgments:*** This is Moses' conclusion to the conditions of the covenant that God made with Israel. By stating the conditions in preparation for their entrance into Canaan, they could know when they broke the covenant by their disobedience of any specific law. Since Israel had accepted the promises of the covenant, then she had also accepted the conditions of the covenant. In Deuteronomy, this is the end of the legal matters of the covenant. From chapters 27 to 30 Moses focuses on exhortations in maintaining the covenant.

Warning Concerning Apostasy (27:1 – 28:68)

Outline: (1) Recited laws on Mt. Ebal (27:1-8), (2) Curses for disobedience (27:9-26), (3) Blessings for faithfulness (28:1-14), (4) Consequences of disobedience (28:15-68)

Chapter 27

RECITED LAWS ON MT. EBAL

Now that Moses had given the terms of the covenant contract, it was time for the people to make their commitment to

the contract. This procedure was according to ancient customs that were taken in reference to the establishment of covenants. When Israel came into the land, therefore, they had to ratify the covenant by stating the blessings in keeping the covenant and the cursings if they violated the conditions of the covenant.

27:1-8 ***Stones:*** This was a common practice among ancient people in reference to codes of law. The ancient Code of Hammurabi and Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser are examples of this practice. The purpose for making such stone inscriptions of the law was to signify the permanent conditions by which a society declared to conduct itself. ***Plaster:*** Since God did not want any cut stones for the construction of altars, the same applied here for the writing of the law. Thus a layer of stucco was to be applied to the stone. Before the stucco dried, the laws of the covenant were to be impressed in the stucco. The significance of inscribing the laws of a covenant in this manner was to preserve them for generations to come. As the fathers committed themselves to the law of God by the action of writing the law on a stone, the following generations would be reminded that the nation had made a commitment to keep the law of God. The Israelites of this immediate generation, therefore, were making a commitment for all the generations of Israel throughout their history.

CURSES FOR DISOBEDIENCE

27:9-13 ***Obey the voice of the Lord your God*:** This is contrary to the spirit of the idolatrous nations that Israel was to eradicate from the land. The thinking of the idolater was that his conceived god listened to the imagination of the worshiper. Therefore, the commandments of the idolatrous god were determined by the will of the worshiper. But in reference to Israel, it was God speaking His laws to them. They must listen to the One who originated the covenant, and who gave the laws. Neither the covenant nor the laws of the covenant were the invention of Israel. Moses' repetition of the blessings and curses of the covenant was an exercise to remind them that they were not the inventors of either the covenant or laws. The exercise reminded them that the God they served spoke from Mt. Sinai. They did not speak Him into existence by the imagination of their religious nature. ***Gerizim ... Ebal:*** The sons of Jacob's legitimate wives were to be stationed on Mt. Gerizim to pronounce the blessings. The sons of Jacob through his concubines were to stand on Mt. Ebal and pronounce the cursings. Reuben, who gave up his birthright (Gn 49:4), and Zebulun, Leah's youngest son (Gn 30:19,20), were placed in the group that was to stand on Mt. Ebal in order to make up six tribes standing on each Mountain. There could also be indicated in this division the geographical settlement of the tribes, for the tribes of blessing, with the possible exception of Issachar, settled in the southern regions of Canaan. The other six tribes generally settled in the northern regions, including Reuben and Gad.

27:14-26 The ceremony that is described here was different from the pronouncing of the blessings and cursings of the covenant. In this ceremony, the Levites pronounced only the curses for disobedience, then all the people were to respond. In this action, the people called down judgment on themselves if they disobeyed the conditions of the covenant. All the laws that are mentioned in this context are stated throughout the law, and thus these became representative of all the laws of the covenant. In general, many of the laws that are stated here are laws that could be violated in secret and without the knowledge of others. The principle behind the mention of such laws was to direct the people's minds to focus on their own hearts (See Ps 139). Though they might think that they could commit sin in secret, and thus escape punishment, God knew their actions and would eventually hand down judgment.

Chapter 28

BLESSINGS FOR FAITHFULNESS

28:1-14 See Lv 26:3-13. ***If you will harken:*** A covenant with God first focuses on the blessings. However, if the conditions of the covenant were broken, the curses would be severe. In this case, obedience would bring blessings. If obedient, Israel would be blessed in victory over all her enemies. She would enjoy the fullness of storehouses. She would be established as God's holy people among the nations. God would take ownership of this nation that submitted to His laws. The principle that is taught here is that this covenanted nation could expect blessings when she conducted herself according to the moral principles of God.

CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE

28:15-19 See Lv 26:14-46. The curses proclaim the results of disobedience. If obedient, Israel would as a nation be blessed in victory over her enemies, with physical and spiritual prosperity. However, if they were disobedient, the blessings would be reversed. We must keep in mind that God was speaking nationally to a nation of people. Though individuals would enjoy the specifics of a national blessing in a nation that is obedient to the moral laws of God, they, as a nation, would also suffer the specifics of national disobedience.

28:20-26 The curses would affect both the physical and material areas of life of both man and animal. Man would be afflicted with disease and animals with plagues and drought. The punishment would be so great that they would be an example of horror to all the nations around them. Verse 25 is often translated "removed into all the kingdoms," but the better translation is "horror to all the kingdoms." In the midst of such great cursings, Israel would become the horror of the world and an example of what happens when nations forsake God. If we could apply these principles to nations today, we can understand that if nations violate the principles of social order that are within the laws of God, they cannot be blessed nations. When corruption, crime, disrespect for human life, and disrespect for one's neighbor rule in a society, that society cannot be blessed. It can only be cursed to be a horror to other nations. In reference to Israel, as the nations witnessed her blessing because of her obedience to her God, they would also clearly understand that Israel's digression into decadence would be evidence that she had forsaken her God.

28:27-37 The curses are intensified in these verses. The body of man would be physically affected with boils and the

infections that come with plagues. They would suffer madness, blindness and frustration. Invading nations would eat their crops. The finality of the punishment would be that they would be taken into another land where another king would be set over them. There they would be in the midst of the idol gods of their captors.

28:38-48 The curses of plague and famine would bring Israel to her financial knees. She would become a devastated nation living in a land ravaged by plague and famine. She would become a nation stricken with poverty, the opposite of the land of milk and honey into which she was about to venture when these words were spoken. The reason for these curses would be that in the future Israel would give up on God, and thus, God would give up on them and hand them over to their enemies.

28:49-57 Their disobedience would cause them to circle around socially to become that from which they were delivered. They were delivered out of the bondage of Egypt, but they would again be brought into the bondage of the Assyrian and Babylonian kingdoms, which kingdoms were only minor kingdoms at the time these curses were stated. When these invading forces would eventually approach unto the poverty stricken Israel, the Israelites would resort to the lowest behavioral actions of life in order to survive. In their state of devastation and moral degradation they would resort to cannibalism. They would behave as animals with one another in order to survive. The disgusting description here of what they would eventually become should shock them and others into realizing what happens to societies when men forsake the law of God. When depraved men have no conscience toward God, they digress below animal behavior with one another.

28:58-68 The curses were a prophecy of what God knew would eventually happen in the history of Israel. However, because He knew such would happen does not mean that He predestined these events. His foreknowledge does not necessitate predestination. Israel could make a choice concerning their future. They could choose to obey, and thus continue to enjoy the blessings of the covenant. However, if they chose to disobey, they were condemned to suffer the consequences of disobedience. The nature of the curses that are mentioned here is a reversal of the blessings. They escaped the plagues of Egypt through obedience, but they would suffer plagues because of disobedience. Because of obedience they multiplied in Egypt (Ex 1:12), but their disobedience would result in the decimation of their population to a remnant. Obedience brought the blessing of the promised land, but disobedience would send them as captives into a foreign land. Obedience brought them together as a nation, but disobedience would scatter them throughout the nations. Finally, the nations would even reject them as slaves.

As Bible students we stand aghast at the consequences of Israel's disobedience. We thus wonder how a nation could fall to such a low moral level after having experienced the greatness of God. The answer is simple. They forgot the law of God. By the time the consequences that are mentioned in this chapter began to play out in their history, they were totally ignorant of the law of God. They had no Bibles that were distributed among the tribes. There were no Bible classes or lectureships. The situation became so bad that there was no known copy of the Torah in all the land of Palestine by the reign of Josiah. It was only when some renovations were being made on the temple in Josiah's reign that a copy of the law was discovered. When Josiah read it, he was terrified when he read these words. He subsequently initiated a total restoration in Israel, beginning with the killing of all those who presumed to be priests of God, but were themselves totally ignorant of the word of God. The historical lesson is clear. When God's people become ignorant of the word of God, they will lead themselves away by seeking to be like the religious nations around them. The only way to prevent apostasy, therefore, is to be a people who are continually studying the word of God. Leaders who do not focus the people's mind on the word of God, but on emotions and feelings instead of the word, are those who are leading the people astray to serve false gods. It will be a terrifying thing to stand before God in judgment totally ignorant of His word.

The Renewal Of The Covenant (29:1 – 30:20)

Outline: (1) Remember the past (29:1-9), (2) Warnings against hypocrisy (29:10-29), (3) Blessings in keeping the covenant (30:1-20)

Chapter 29

REMEMBER THE PAST

29:1-9 In order for Israel to swear an oath to the covenant, chapters 29 and 30 restate representative portions of the conditions of the covenant. ***Words of the covenant:*** Though in the Hebrew text this verse is the last verse of chapter 28, the meaning here seems to make the verse refer to the words that Moses is about to write. ***Horeb:*** The covenant that was made at Mt. Sinai (Horeb) is renewed here before the nation went into the promised land. Moses began by reminding Israel of three specific blessings in the past. These were Israel's deliverance from Egypt, God's provision for them during the wilderness wandering, and Israel's victories over Sihon and Og.

WARNINGS AGAINST HYPOCRISY

29:10-29 ***Those who are not here with us this day:*** Those twenty years old and older who had rebelled 38 years before by not taking the land immediately, were not here present at the time these words were spoken. They had died in the wilderness. But the new generation of all the Israelite families, the servants and aliens, were present for the taking of the oath to renew the covenant at this time. Those yet unborn in the future were also taking the oath by their living families. It was as if the posterity of all Israel for all time was making a commitment to God's covenant until the Messiah came. ***Idols ... the gods of these nations:*** This is the natural result of a religious people who forget the word of God. This was the primary threat to Israel. The nation would eventually become ignorant of the word of God, for the priests would fail to be diligent to keep the word of God before the people. As a result, the people would easily adopt the concepts and practices of the gods of the nations around them. They would eventually come to

the fulfillment of the statement of Hosea 4:6. *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."* Ignorance of the word of God is something that people bring upon themselves. Idolatry easily follows ignorance of the word of God. Because of the ignorance of the word of God people lead themselves away from God by creating of gods after their own imagination. If the history of Israel proves anything, it proves that an entire nation of people can become idolaters by forgetting the word of God. ***Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord:*** Though Israel in the time of their ignorance would not understand why they were suffering, the pagan nations around them would. These nations would remember that Israel was blessed by "their God" when they kept His word. But they were cursed by "their God" when they became ignorant of His will. Though the pagan nations worshiped their false gods, and lived in godless societies, they continued in their circumstances as such nations would under their own direction. However, Israel was different. The curses of Israel were intentionally and specifically brought upon them by God because they had forsaken the conditions of the covenant that God had made with them. No specific curses were given to the pagan nations if they forsook the will of God. But curses were given to Israel, which meant that Israel had to suffer the consequences of their sin because they had been allowed to have a special relationship with God. The point is that as the blessings manifested the existence of God as the only true and living God, the cursings also manifested the existence that the God of Israel was displeased with them. The cursings were the fulfillment of the prophecy of this book. The nations around Israel certainly understood this. ***The secret things:*** Since the things not revealed by God are unknown to man, Israel must live by that which has been revealed. There is no sense in frustrating one's self about that which has not been revealed. One should busy himself with that which has been revealed. Those who seek for that which is not revealed are foolishly contradicting the principle of this scripture. Only God knows the future. Knowing the future is not for man. We thus know when one is not from God when he frustrates himself and others by hopelessly predicting the future, which alone is God's business.

Chapter 30

BLESSINGS IN KEEPING THE COVENANT

30:1-10 ***When all these things have come upon you:*** This is in the language of not being a prophecy or a probability, but a certainty. All the cursings would come upon them because of their disobedience. The verb tense of the statements in the text, therefore, emphasize a warning to the people. Since the cursings would be inevitable, then they must struggle to see how long they can prolong the blessings by their obedience. ***Turn your captivity:*** If disobedience brought disaster and exile, then repentance would bring renewal and restoration. If ignorance of the law resulted in their creating of gods after their own imagination, then knowledge of the law would restore their commitment to the one true and living God. This answers the question as to why after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities Israel developed the ministry of the scribes. Scribes were men who dedicated themselves to making copies of the Old Testament books. The production of the Septuagint and communities as the Essenes, who dedicated themselves to making copies of the Old Testament Scriptures, all came after their return from Babylonian captivity. The reason for this was that Israel had learned well her lesson of being rejected because of her rejection of a knowledge of God and His word (See Hs 4:6). In order to have copies of the word of God readily available throughout the land, copies were made to be read in every synagogue they built after the Babylonian captivity. No longer would there be few copies of the law throughout Israel. Unfortunately, at the time these words were written by Moses, they were taking for granted the privilege of having the law written and accessed only by the priests and Levites, whose responsibility it was to teach the people. ***Circumcise your heart:*** This spiritual circumcision would be a restoration of the covenant because of their restoration to obedience from the heart. Their obedience would again result in their prosperity, but curses on all their enemies. Their repentance would bring them back from Babylonian captivity and restore the nation to the land. However, within these words Moses was certainly looking toward a time of spiritual restoration when the Messiah would eventually come to make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (See Jr 31:31-34; Ez 36:26-28; Rm 2:28,29; Cl 2:10,11).

30:11-20 ***Not hidden ... nor is it beyond your reach:*** They could never complain that the law was too difficult to understand or hard to implement in their behavior. All that God requires of men to do to be saved takes no scholar to understand and apply. For this reason God holds each man individually responsible for his own eternal destiny. With obedience there is life and good. With disobedience there is death and evil. There was nothing difficult about this for Israel to understand. They had been given free choice, and thus, if they chose death and evil, they would be held accountable. ***Choose life:*** The final exhortation is to make a free-moral decision to choose that which will bring life and good. ***For He is your life:*** No better words could be used to conclude the preceding exhortations. When one stays close to God, he will have life. No eternal life exists outside the presence of God. Therefore, one must choose to come into and continually stay in the presence of God in order to maintain eternal life (See comments 2 Th 1:6-9). Since only God is eternal, then Scripture concludes that only those who choose to cleave to Him will enjoy eternal existence in His presence (1 Jn 5:11). It is imperative, therefore, that one discover how to come into an eternal relationship with God. This is only possible by going to God through His word.

The Final Counsel Of Moses (31:1-29)

Outline: (1) Charge to the people (31:1-6), (2) Commissioning of Joshua (31:7,8), (3) Reading of the law (31:9-13), (4) Warnings concerning the future (31:14-29), (5) The song of Moses (31:30 – 32:43)

Chapter 31
CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE

31:1-6 The end of Moses' life had come. He could not lead the people into Canaan for two reasons. **(1)** ***I can no longer go out and come in:*** Moses was at this time 120 years old. He was one who had experienced a phenomenal number of events, from the Egyptian palace to the east banks of the Jordan River. Nevertheless, he confessed here that he was too old to enter Canaan to be with Israel throughout the coming years of war with the Canaanites. **(2)** ***You will not go over:*** This banishment of God from crossing the Jordan came as a result of his earlier sin at Meribah (see 4:21,22; Nm 20:12). Joshua: This was the new leader, the one who had been with Israel from the days of the exodus from Egypt (1:38; Nm 27:18-23). Joshua did have the physical vigor to fight with the army of Israel to take the land. ***Sihon ... Og:*** These kings and nations were the greatest that Israel would face. Israel's victory over them was God's guarantee that they would defeat any other nation within the borders of Canaan (See 2:32 – 3:10).

COMMISSIONING OF JOSHUA

31:7,8 ***Be strong and courageous:*** This public commissioning of Joshua was not only personal for the benefit of Joshua, but it was public for all the people. The commissioning was an indirect encouragement for the people to remember the promise of God that they take the land, and to be assured that He would always be with them. It would be God who would fight for them. He would physically empower every soldier of Israel. He proved such in the past by giving them victory over all the nations who resisted them during their journey to the banks of the Jordan.

READING OF THE LAW

31:9-13 ***Read this law:*** In the seventh year when there was the release of all those who had given themselves to the bondage of another because of debt (15:1-15), at the feast of Tabernacles (16:13-15), they were to publicly read the law of the covenant to the people. It was the responsibility of the Levites and elders to perform this reading in the ears of the people. ***All Israel:*** For six years only the males were obligated to attend the feast of Tabernacles. But for the seventh year at the feast of Tabernacles, all Israel, men, women, children and aliens, were to attend the reading of the law. Since all the inhabitants of the land enjoyed the benefits of the covenant, then everyone needed to be reminded why they were blessed.

WARNINGS CONCERNING THE FUTURE

31:14-23 This exhortation to Moses and Joshua took place at the tabernacle where God communed with the leaders of Israel (Ex 25:22; 29:42; 30:36). The purpose for this direct encounter with the Lord by Joshua was to reconfirm his commissioning. Words were earlier spoken to commission him, but here the words were confirmed with action by the direct communication of God with Joshua. ***They will forsake Me:*** In order for Joshua to lead a stiffnecked people, he had to understand the inevitable apostasy that awaited the nation in the years to come. With such understanding, all leaders need to understand that apostasy is only one generation away. By understanding this nature of people, one can take measures to prevent or delay apostasy. The legacy of leaders is established by the faithfulness of their lives. Joshua's legacy would be one where he made a firm commitment for his family to serve the Lord (Ja 24:15). ***Write this song for yourselves:*** The purpose of the song was to communicate the words of God in song to the people. They could memorize the song, and thus continually have on their lips the word and will of God.

31:24-29 ***Writing the words of this law in a book:*** There is no reason to question this statement. Regardless of the many assumptions that others wrote the book of the law, all such assumptions must deal with this clear statement that Moses was the writer. ***Ark of the covenant:*** Because the structure of the ark contained the commandments of the covenant (the ten commandments written on stone), it was known as the ark of the covenant. ***Witness against you:*** The words of the written law, the Torah, were placed beside, not in, the ark. In this way it would continually be a witness of the sin that Israel would commit.

The Song Of Moses
(31:30 – 32:43)

The last verse of chapter 31 should be the introduction to the following song of Moses. The song was to be memorized by the nation and sung while they were in their homes. Since it was to be sung throughout the generations of Israel, it was written in a style as if it were sung by those who lived centuries after this writing. The reading of the law was every seven years when they gathered as a nation during the feast of Tabernacles. The purpose of both the reading of the law and the singing of the song was that when they fell into apostasy, they could not claim ignorance of the law, for the song reminded them of God's will. As long as the Levites and elders fulfilled their duty, they would be taught the law of God, and thus prevented from falling into ignorance of the law (See Hs 4:6). Unfortunately, the spiritual leaders failed in their responsibilities to teach the word of God to the people, and thus the people eventually forgot the law and the singing of the song.

Chapter 32
THE SONG OF MOSES

32:1-14 ***Heavens ... earth:*** These are called upon to give witness to the covenant between God and Israel. ***Drop as rain:*** The teaching of God brings forth fruit when it falls on contrite hearts. ***The Rock:*** God is the stability of Israel and for all who will conform to His teachings. These teachings are perfect because they are the reflection of His perfect character. ***Has He not made you:*** This is the interrogation of the apostates. Since God made them, then certainly it is God they must follow. Their rebellion would be the indication of their ingratitude. ***He separated the sons of Adam:*** Nations were created by God when He separated the descendants of Adam. Jacob (Israel) then became the possession of the Lord. They were His own people. As His people, He watched over them

during their wilderness wanderings. Israel became the adopted child of God who cared for her. ***Apple of His eye:*** God closely looked upon Israel with care, and thus the reflection of Israel could be seen in the pupil of God's eye. ***The Lord alone did lead him:*** Israel could not claim any self-determination in becoming a nation and power to conquer her enemies. No god they could have created after their own imagination could have delivered and developed them into the nation they were at the time these words were written. ***The high places:*** God had exalted them to rule over the occupying nations of Canaan.

32:15-18 ***Jeshurun:*** Or, "upright." This may be something as a nickname for Israel since it is derived from the same Hebrew word that is translated "Israel." The name is used ironically here in that God ceased to show favor toward them because the "upright" became unrighteous. ***Strange gods:*** Israel did not forsake being religious. They insulted the graciousness of God. They not only went after the gods of their own creation, but after the gods of other nations. They turned from the God who revealed Himself from heaven to the gods that were revealed to them by the Canaanites. Their behavior would be a humiliating blow to God who adopted this rejected child of the wilderness. ***Sacrificed to devils:*** This word is used only one other time in the Old Testament. In Psalm 106:37 David wrote, *"They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils ...."* We would assume that those who were reading this song for the first time cringed when they heard these prophetic pronouncements of what their descendants would eventually do. ***Gods that recently appeared:*** They dreamed up gods that even those who were first hearing these words, "their fathers," had not and could not conceive in their minds. In ignorance of the word of God, there is no limit to which the human mind can digress.

32:19-27 ***I will hide My face from them:*** Since the children left their Father, the Father would not be found by the children. Since they wanted to go their own way by creating their own gods that approved of their wicked behavior, God would allow them the freedom to go (See comments Rm 1:24-28). ***Provoked Me to anger:*** Since Israel counted as god those who were no gods at all, He was stirred to unleash upon them the curses that came with their disobedience to the laws of the covenant. If they desired to live like savage barbarians according to the desires of their lusts, then God would allow them the opportunity. However, they would have to pay the price for giving up a knowledge of God. ***A fire is kindled:*** God did not leave them without curses for their disobedience as He did with other nations who simply reaped what they had sown. God specifically brought on them the curses that were pronounced in this book because Israel as a unique nation was in a covenant relationship with God. ***Hell:*** The word here is "*Sheol*," the grave, not the eternal punishment of hell. ***Mischiefs ... arrows:*** God would be direct in His punishment in time. At the end of time, He would hand down the destiny of eternal hell that the disobedient would eventually endure for their sins. But the judgment in time would be that they endure the invasion of foreign armies, as well as the inward struggle against disease and famine. ***I will scatter them:*** Through the Assyrian captivity of 722/721 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was scattered among the nations. In the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C., the southern kingdom was also scattered among the nations. ***Our hand is triumphant:*** The enemies of Israel might make this statement in their conquest of Israel. But the fact would be that God worked through the enemies of Israel in order to judge Israel. The Assyrians and Babylonians were the proxy judges by which God punished Israel for her rebellion.

32:28-33 ***O that they were wise:*** The enemies of Israel would boast in their conquest of Israel, not knowing that it was God who empowered them to carry out His judgment against Israel. Because they did not know that it was God working in their insufficient armies to judge Israel, they themselves would suffer the judgment of God and come to their ruin because of their arrogance. ***Sodom ... Gomorrah:*** The enemies certainly did not conquer Israel because they were morally superior to Israel. They were morally depraved and idolatrous nations. They could conquer Israel only by God's help.

32:34-43 Once judgment had been rendered to Israel through their destruction by their enemies, then the Lord would have compassion on them. He would manifest His compassion by the destruction of Israel's enemies. Once Israel had been brought to her knees in captivity, she would again be restored. But she would be restored because of her repentance. ***The rock:*** These were the false gods in which Israel trusted. Belief in these gods took them into captivity. ***I will render vengeance:*** The Rock of the one true and living God would render vengeance on those nations who took pride in their conquest of His people. Because the nations did not understand that it was God judging Israel through them, they themselves would suffer the vengeance of God. ***Rejoice with His people:*** All must rejoice in God's righteous judgment of Israel and His just vengeance on the enemies of Israel. God shows both justice and mercy. He justly punishes disobedience, but shows mercy to His people in times of repentance. He is just both in His judgment and in the salvation of His people (Is 45:21).

Moses' Final Charge And Farewell (32:44 – 33:29)

Outline: (1) Closing exhortations (32:44-47), (2) Preparation for Moses' death (32:48-52), (3) Final blessing (33:1-29), (4) Death of Moses (34:1-12)

CLOSING EXHORTATIONS

32:44-47 Both Moses and Joshua are given credit for writing and delivering the song to the people. ***Joshua:*** Hoshea was Joshua's original name. It was changed to "Joshua" ("the Lord is salvation") by Moses (Nm 13:8,16). ***All Israel:*** Unless the entire nation submitted to the principles of the song, they would fall soon into apostasy. The reason they all had to give heed to the words was to prevent the next generation from falling away. The words of the song were essentially life for them, for if they forgot the word of God, in their ignorance they would be rejected by God (Hs 4:6). This all happened, and thus the prophecies of such made God's judgment just.

PREPARATION FOR MOSES' DEATH

32:48-52 ***That same day:*** The departure of Moses from Israel was on the day that he delivered the message of the song to Israel. God summoned him to Mt. Nebo, a mountain no one now knows. ***Abarim:*** This was probably a range of mountains of which Nebo was one of many peaks. ***See the land:*** Though Moses was not allowed to enter the land because of previous sin at Meribah, he was allowed to see the land (See Nm 33:37-39).

Chapter 33
FINAL BLESSING

33:1-5 A spoken blessing had the binding power of a written last will and testament (See Gn 27:34-38; 49:1-27). In this context Moses blessed the children of Jacob before he died. All the tribes were blessed except Simeon who was eventually absorbed into the tribe of Judah (Ja 19:2-9). Though in the third person, the blessings came from Moses. The blessings were an exaltation of the goodness of God toward His people throughout the centuries of their past. Angels attended unto the work of God among men. God was King of Israel when the covenant was made and the law was given to Israel. His plan was that He remain their only king until the coming of King Jesus. Unfortunately, after a little over 400 years from this date, Israel would ask for a king on earth that they could see, and to whom they could submit.

33:6-25 A comparison between the blessing of Moses here and that of Jacob in Genesis 49:1-27 is significant. The comparisons show that while some tribes continued their spiritual weakness, others transformed into being great tribes to the glory of God. ***Reuben:*** Reuben would not vanish as a tribe but would grow into a great company of people. ***Judah:*** Since Judah would eventually comprise the southern kingdom of Israel, in the future he would be received back into the fold of the other tribes of Israel after the Babylonian captivity. ***Levi:*** As keepers of the judgments of God (Thummim and Urim), Levi was scattered among the tribes for priestly functions, and thus blessed in his work to keep the tribes close to God. During the events of the golden calf at Mt. Sinai, Levi remained strong for God (Ex 32:26-29). However, at Meribah he was tested, and failed in his tribal leadership (6:16; Ex 17:1-7). Nevertheless, he would continue to exercise his duties of instructing Israel in the law and carrying out the sacrifices for Israel. ***Benjamin:*** God would dwell with this tribe because Benjamin would bear God upon his shoulders. God would be the headship of this tribe throughout her history. ***Joseph:*** Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, were the tribal extensions of the seed of Joseph. These two tribes would grow into great military strength, Ephraim becoming the predominant tribe of Israel. ***Zebulun ... Issachar:*** These two tribes share a blessing. Zebulun was the seafaring tribe and Issachar was one of agriculture. They would use their religious celebrations as opportunities for commercial negotiations. ***Gad:*** Gad was blessed because he became a strong military force. This tribe chose the fruitful pasture lands east of the Jordan (Nm 32:1-5). ***Dan:*** He was known for sudden and devastating military attacks against the enemies of God (See Ja 19:47; Jg 18:27). ***Naphtali:*** This tribe would be favored by nature because they settled in the north near the Sea of Galilee. ***Asher:*** This tribe was blessed with great prosperity. Asher would grow into a populous tribe and enjoy great popularity. Though the tribe settled in the northwestern part of the land, they would be a strong tribe to buffer Israel from any invasion from the north.

33:26-29 God is here pictured as the help of Israel who comes to her rescue in times of trial. Israel was the dwelling place of God on earth because the prosperity and religious nature of the people manifested His presence. The protecting arms of God are always around Israel, even while she digresses into sin. Because of the uniqueness of God, therefore, Israel was unique among the nations. Though the enemies of Israel would seek to destroy her, through the help of God, Israel would occupy their high places. Israel would bring down the deistic imaginations of the cultures she would depose from Canaan. God would thus be Israel's refuge and support, the supplier of her every need.

Chapter 34
THE DEATH OF MOSES

34:1-8 ***Mountain of Nebo:*** Pisgah would be the top edge of Nebo. Before his death, and possibly through the surreal exposure of a vision, Moses was shown the land of promise to which he had struggled for forty years to lead a nation to possess. Though unable to enter the land because of previous sin, he was granted the privilege to see the destiny of his labors, a land that flowed with milk and honey for the people of God. It was surely a magnificent experience for a 120-year-old servant who had labored well to mediate for God to bring the Messiah into the world through a people with whom He made a covenant. ***He buried him:*** What more precious thing could happen to a faithful servant of God than to be buried personally by God. It was an unknown grave since Israel would surely have idolized the grave by making it some religious shrine. It has never been in the plan of God to have tombs worshiped by His people. For this reason, there are no known tombs today where great leaders of God have been buried. From what happened in the case of Moses, therefore, we would assume that God does not want shrines built for those who are His leaders. It is better for them to be buried in obscurity in order that our minds focus on God, not man. When men build shrines for their religious leaders, they will make gods out of their dead leaders. They will take their focus off God and place it on man. ***His eye was not dim, nor his natural vigor abated:*** The physical strength of Moses in his old age was a miracle of God to all who witnessed the continued preservation of his body throughout the years. Since his physical body maintained its vigor, we would assume that he did not die a natural death. His spirit was taken by God at the time He determined He should die. As Jesus gave up His spirit as a free-choice of death, so Moses relinquished his spirit into the hands of the Father of our spirits. When Moses had fulfilled his destiny of leading the nation of Israel to the banks of the Jordan River, it was time for him to go to his eternal home.

34:9-12 When Moses died, the fact that the nation did not go into chaos was proof that he had focused the attention of the people on God, not on himself. Moses was not some dictator who controlled the people by the power of a military. The fact that he led a people for forty years without becoming a dictator of the people is evidence that his leadership was from God. It is also evidence of the godly character of Moses. When men have absolute power over a people for a great length of time, they are corrupted by the power. But the fact that Moses did not become a corrupted dictator who was obsessed with power, is evidence that God actually spoke to him. Moses thus walked in the fear of God, having experienced all the marvels that God worked in his sight. For this reason, he focused the people on God, not himself. When a people are focused on God as their leader is so focused, the passing of the heads of state makes no difference in the peoples' obedient relationship with God. It is the goal of every leader for God, therefore, to focus the minds of the people on God, not man. ***There has not risen a prophet in Israel like unto Moses:*** It could be added that no leader in the history of mankind, other than the Lord Jesus Himself, has been a leader among people as Moses (See 18:15-19; Nm 12:6-8). Herein again is evidence that God actually spoke to Moses. Without the strength of a military, no man of his own power could have led a people out of the captivity of another nation and into the freedom of their own land as did Moses. But this is exactly what Moses did. If we thought as mere men, we would wonder how one man could do such a thing. The fact that one man on his own without a military did what God did through Moses is evidence that God was with Moses. Nothing has ever happened as this in the history of mankind. The uniqueness of Israel's deliverance from Egypt will always stand as evidence of God's work among men, and specifically, in the life of Moses. There is no logical answer to the phenomenon of Israel's deliverance from Egypt if we discount the work of God in the life of Moses, as well as in the lives of the Israelites. The birth of the nation of Israel will always stand as an historical miracle for both the existence of God, as well as the intervention of God in the lives of men. The nation came into existence because of the work of God among men, and it was sustained in the land of promise because of His providential care.

These final words of Moses conclude the Pentateuch. These words were written to preserve Israel until the coming of the Messiah. Because Israel went through several apostasies, other books of history as Joshua and Judges were written. When the nation was in the final years of their history before going into the captivities of Assyria and Babylon, the prophets spoke and wrote in order to preserve a remnant from the captivities. However, in reference to their faith and civil laws, the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy remained the law and foundation of their faith. If they forsook the law of God, it was an indication that they had forsake faith in God.

Joshua

WRITER

The writer who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this book is commonly assumed to be Joshua, Moses' assistant (See 24:25,26). However, there has been some controversy concerning Joshua's authorship, as well as the date when the book was initially written. Though several theories have been given as to who wrote the book, no one theory has been accepted by a majority of scholarship. Regardless of whether we may not come to any conclusion concerning the human authorship of the book, one thing is true. The writer was inspired by the Holy Spirit. This fact is clearly indicated by the nature of the book and its historical accuracy in reference to archaeological discoveries and its place in Jewish history.

In reference to Jewish tradition, the Talmud assumes that Joshua wrote the book, though it is believed that Eleazar and Phinehas provided the closing words in reference to the death of Joshua. Since some parts of the book were obviously written after the death of Joshua, it is assumed that other authors participated in the final words of its content.

The name Joshua means, "the Lord will save." The Greek equivalent of the name is "Jesus" (See At 7:45; Hb 4:8). The name sometimes takes the form of the name Hoshea (Nm 13:8). Joshua was the son of Nun and from the tribe of Ephraim (Nm 13:8).

Joshua was initially chosen to be the representative of his tribe, the tribe of Ephraim (Nm 13:8,16). He was later chosen as one of twelve spies who were sent out to spy out the land of Canaan immediately after Israel received the law on Mt. Sinai (Nm 13:8,16). He manifested his military skills when he led in Israel's battle against the Amalekites (Ex 17:9). After Israel was condemned to 38 years of wandering in the wilderness, he worked as Moses' assistant (Ex 13:8; 24:13; 32:17; Ja 1:1). He was placed in charge of the tabernacle when idolatry led to God's threat to destroy the nation (Ex 33:11). He was loyal to Moses and his command because he realized that Moses was God's authority on earth (Nm 11:24-29).

As the Spirit-led successor of Moses (Nm 27:18), he was commissioned directly by God to lead Israel in the conquest of Canaan (Ex 17:8,9; Dt 31:14,23). Throughout the years of conquest, he manifested true loyalty to God and the covenant that God had established with Israel. According to Josephus, Joshua was approximately 85 years old at the time he assumed the leadership of Israel. After successfully leading God's people in their initial and national conquest of Canaan, he died when he was 110 years old. He was buried at Timnath Serah in Ephraim (Ja 24:29,30).

The traditional date of writing is somewhere around 1375 B.C. After the years of conquest of Canaan, the

DATE

book was written in order to give Israel a reminder of the history of their battles in order to possess their inheritances of the land of promise. Since Israel could not have done what they did in conquering the promise land, God led them through almost two decades of military struggles against the Canaanites in order that they appreciate the land. The recording of these battles was to remind generations to come that Israel's possession of the land came with great military struggle. The book, therefore, was written after Israel had rest in the land, sometime immediately after the close of the military victories that led to the possession of the land. This period began at the time of the crossing of the Jordan around 1400 B.C. to the time when the tribes settled in their possessions. Bible students have assumed that this was a period of 20 to 25 years. This was about the duration of time of a person who could go to war. These warriors who conquered the land had the responsibility, therefore, to communicate the stories of their conquests on to the next generation.

Entrance Into The Promised Land
(1:1 – 5:15)

Outline: (1) God charges Joshua (1:1-9), (2) Preparations to cross the Jordan (1:10-18), (3) Sending of the spies (2:1-24), (4) Crossing the Jordan (3:1-17), (5) Erecting the Gilgal memorial (4:1-24), (6) Preparations for the Canaan conquest (5:1-15)

Chapter 1
GOD CHARGES JOSHUA

1:1-9 ***Go over this Jordan:*** This is a transition command, one that indicates a change in the history of Israel. Israel had fought defensive wars to come to this point. Now they were about to fight offensive wars to take the land. ***I have given to you:*** This was the promised land that had already been given to Israel (Gn 12:1-7; 13:14-17). However, God would not do for them what they could do for themselves. With His help, they had to take the land from the hands of the Canaanites. The land included everything from east of the Euphrates River to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It included the land of the Hittites to the north that extended into Asia Minor. It extended south into the Sinai Peninsula. Israel never occupied all this land throughout their history. However, during the reigns of David and Solomon most of the land was brought under tribute. The extent of the land that was promised manifested God's lavish gift to His people. They could grow as a nation and populate the land as long as they remained faithful to His will. ***As I was with Moses:*** The passing of the great leader, Moses, did not mean that God would cease working through His designated leadership of Israel. The nation of Israel was not built around a strong leader. It was built upon the leadership of God who worked through chosen men. The passing of leaders, therefore, did not mean the passing of the strength of the nation of Israel. This is an evidence that the nation of Israel was produced and sustained by God. Nations that are built on the powerful leadership of one man usually dissipate when the leader dies. ***Observe ... the law:*** The law was the writings of Moses that the Jews referred to as the Torah. Obedience to the law was the condition for the continued existence of the nation of Israel. As long as they were obedient to the will of God, they would remain as a nation in the land. ***Meditate on it:*** God's leaders make a special effort to think on God's word every day. Their minds must not be so busied with the things of the world that they do not have time to think on God's word. ***Have I not commanded you:*** Joshua's command to lead Israel was not based on his personal ambitions. His leadership was sanctioned by God, for it was God who commissioned him to lead Israel in her efforts to take the land. ***Be strong:*** When one realizes his God-given destiny, he is strengthened to carry out that destiny. Therefore, God challenges us to discover our destiny to do His work through our lives. With this discovery comes strength and fearlessness. We live our lives according to God's will when we realize that God has given us the gifts to accomplish our destiny. We are able to focus our lives on our destiny without being deterred. One who has discovered his God-given destiny knows that God is with him as he lives according to the will of God. In our assurance that God is with us, we are able to overcome opposition by the power of God working in our lives (See Rm 8:31,37; Ph 4:13).

PREPARATIONS TO CROSS THE JORDAN

1:10-18 ***Prepare provisions:*** It was now time in the history of Israel that the manna and quail cease. When they crossed over the Jordan, God stopped the supply of the manna and quail. God had proved that He was for and with them during the wandering in the wilderness. But now it was time for them to provide for themselves. They would live off the spoils of their victories during the years of conquest, and then plant and harvest when they finished taking the land from the Canaanites. ***Reubenites ... Gadites ... Manasseh:*** Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had been given land possessions east of the Jordan (Nm 32; Dt 3:12-20). It was now time for them to keep their promise to send their fighting men with the rest of the army of Israel in order to take the land. ***All that you command us we will do:*** Joshua called on the three tribes to be loyal to the commandment of Moses. In this context, they responded by pledging their loyalty to Joshua in order to keep their commitment to Moses.

Chapter 2
SENDING OF THE SPIES

2:1-24 ***Spy secretly:*** Contrary to the purpose of sending out the spies 40 years before when they sinned by questioning the commandment of God to immediately take the land, the sending of the spies here was proper military strategy. God's command that Israel cross the Jordan assumed that Joshua was now to proceed with the wisdom of a military leader in order to

conquer the land. ***Rahab:*** We must also assume that the sending of the spies gave an opportunity for Rahab and her family to be discovered and saved because of her faith (See Js 2:25). ***Harlot:*** We must keep in mind that the Hebrew words for a "female innkeeper" and "harlot" were the same (See 6:22-25). ***We have heard:*** The reputation of Israel had preceded them. What is unique about Rahab was that the work of God among the Israelites produced faith in Rahab. Her faith would be her legacy (See Hb 11:31). And because of her faith, she worked to save the spies (Js 2:25). Her faith placed her in the lineage of the Messiah to come (Mt 1:5). But did Rahab tell a lie for the sake of the lives of the spies? She knew they came from the Israelites and were returning to them. However, she did not know the immediate directions from which they came, though she knew that Israel was camped on the east side of the Jordan. We must keep in mind that she is just beginning her walk of faith, though still lingering with her life-style of the past. We must also remember that a greater law of God here superseded the possible lie. The preservation of the spies and Israel's taking the land was of greater importance than the lie. What her lie manifested was her choice to align herself with the people of God and not the people of Jericho. In doing this, she exposed herself to execution if it was discovered by the king of the city that she had lied. ***A token of truth:*** Rahab had demonstrated her faith by saving the spies. She was literally saved by works in that a token of truth was established that she and her family would be saved from the destruction of the Israelite army. The scarlet thread was the token of her faith and works, and the signal that the spies were good to their word. ***The Lord has delivered into our hands all the land:*** What a contrast to the report that was given by the spies who returned from the land almost 40 years before. These spies were men of faith. They reported what God had said before, that when the inhabitants of the land heard of God's great work through the Israelites, the heart of the people would melt (Ex 15:15; 23:27; Dt 11:25). When the spies saw that the people of Canaan quaked before the Israelites, they knew that the land had been given to them. They gave no report on the greatness of the walls of Jericho or the strength of the army of Jericho. Such things had no significance when compared to the fact that the local inhabitants were afraid of the Israelites, as well as their trust that God was on their side.

Chapter 3
CROSSING THE JORDAN

3:1-6 ***Joshua rose early:*** This is a good characteristic of a great leader (See 6:12,15; 7:16; 8:10). Great leaders are full of energy and ready to launch into their tasks every day. ***Officers went throughout the camp:*** Israel was at this time ready and organized for movement. Their response to their leadership manifested their unity of spirit to cross the Jordan and engage the enemy for the conquest of the land. ***See the ark of the covenant:*** Under the command of Moses they followed a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Nm 10:33,34). But now they were to begin following the movement of the ark of the covenant, wherein lay the ten commandments of the law (Dt 10:1-6). ***Sanctify yourselves:*** God can do little with those who do not separate themselves from the affairs of the world (See Ex 19:10). He uses totally committed people to do His work.

3:7,8 ***I will begin to magnify you:*** God magnified Joshua for the sake of inspiring the people to follow him. Through the work of supernatural wonders, the people realized that Joshua's leadership was commissioned and sanctioned by God. God thus magnified Joshua through miraculous events in order that the people see and glorify God, not man.

3:9-13 ***The living God is among you:*** The miraculous events that transpired during Israel's crossing of the Jordan were to inspire Israel and reassure them that God was with them. They needed at this time this reassurance in facing the nations that dwelt within the land (See 9:1; 11:3; 24:11; Dt 7:1; compare Gn 13:18; 14:7; 23:3,19; 24:9; 34:2; Nm 13:29).

3:14-17 ***The waters ... stood and rose up in one heap:*** As with the crossing of the Red Sea, so here again the power of God over nature was manifested to Israel. The generation that had experienced the Red Sea event had died. This new generation of leaders needed a reaffirmation of what their fathers experienced when they came out of Egypt. The waters were possibly blocked at Adamah and were backed up 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) north to the city of Zerethan. The crossing took place directly east of Jericho.

Chapter 4
ERECTING THE GILGAL MEMORIAL

4:1-9 ***Take twelve stones:*** God always seeks to leave memorials with us, for we often forget His blessings (Compare Gn 28:18; 31:45-47; 35:17-20; 1 Sm 7:12). The purpose of this memorial was that God wanted them to remember that He had brought them to the brink of the Jordan, and then made it possible for them as a nation to cross the Jordan and begin their conquest of the land. The chosen representatives from each tribe were the beginning of the word-of-mouth testimony to future generations concerning the purpose of this memorial. Throughout Israel's history each generation was to tell their children about what God did in bringing the nation of Israel into the land. For this reason they set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan where the priests stood as the people crossed. The crossing of the Jordan signaled the conclusion of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. The stones were then set up in Gilgal (4:2) to signal the beginning of a nation in the land that God had promised to Abraham centuries before (See Gn 12:1-3).

4:10-14 ***40,000:*** Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh kept their promise by sending over the Jordan 40,000 armed soldiers who helped make up the army of Israel. ***Magnified Joshua:*** After the miraculous event of crossing over the Jordan, the people knew that the Lord was with Joshua. They fully accepted him as God's representative to lead the nation into victory over the Canaanites.

4:15-18 As the Jordan closed, the option of a retreat was also closed. The only way was forward into the task of conquering the land.

4:19-24 The time of year for the crossing of the Jordan was the Western month of April. It was a time when the river ran

full in its banks. ***Gilgal:*** This was the wandering Israelites' first camp in the promised land. This location was different from the Gilgal of 15:7. ***All the people of the earth:*** In this statement is the substance of what is meant in Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:11. Our purpose in having this Old Testament record of what God did with Israel is to build our faith in His work in the Israel of God (the church) today (See Rm 10:17). Christians are to study the Old Testament in order to understand that God also works today in their lives and among the nations. Study of the Old Testament Scriptures brings comfort in being reassured that God is still at work among His people.

Chapter 5
PREPARATION FOR THE CANAAN CONQUEST

5:1-9 ***Their hearts melted:*** Israel's crossing of the Jordan proved to the kings of Canaan that Israel's God was still working for Israel. They had heard rumors of the crossing of the Red Sea, but the crossing of the Jordan during the flood season of April and May struck fear in their hearts. ***Circumcise again:*** Those who had come out of Egypt were circumcised. However, they all died in the wilderness because they refused to enter the land immediately after receiving the law on Mt. Sinai. Throughout the 38 years of wilderness wandering, Israel did not circumcise the male children. But here there is a new beginning, and thus the need to remember God's covenant that He had made with Israel at Mt. Sinai. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant, and thus the circumcision here was to remind them that God had fulfilled His part of the covenant that He had established with them. He had brought them through the wilderness and into the land of promise. Remembering this covenant was more important at this time than proceeding on to the conquest of the land. This camp was thus named Gilgal because all those who had grown up in the wilderness were circumcised at this location.

5:10-12 ***Kept the Passover:*** From the time Israel first kept the Passover in Egypt, this is the third time it is recorded that they kept this feast (See Ex 12; Nm 9:1,2). The eating of the Passover at this time reminded them that their deliverance from Egypt had found its fulfillment in this moment in time when they first dwelt in the land of promise. The Passover, therefore, was a reminder of their bondage in Egypt out of which God had delivered them, but also assurance of that to which God was leading them. The eating of the Passover had both past and future significance. ***Manna ceased:*** Once they ate the Passover in the land of milk and honey, the manna and quail ceased. During the years of conquest, they could live off the spoils of the Canaanites. When they settled down in the years of peace after the conquests, they could live off their own crops.

5:13-15 ***Captain of the Lord's army:*** Others had a similar experience in meeting a divine being (See Gn 12:7; 18:2; Ex 3:5; Nm 22:31). We are not told who this was. Joshua realized immediately that the being was divine, and thus he fell to the ground in worship. Such is the natural response to anyone who is sent from God. Some have assumed that this was the eternal Angel of God, the Son of God in His preincarnate state. Since no angel of God would be so arrogant as to accept worship that is due only to God, we would assume that this conclusion is correct. The captain of the Lord's army here does not rebuke Joshua for his worship, but requires it of him (Compare Rv 22:8,9).

Conquest Of The Promised Land
(6:1 – 12:24)

Outline: (1) Conquest of Jericho (6:1-27), (2) Defeat at Ai (7:1-26), (3) Destruction of Ai (8:1-29), (4) Reading of the law (8:30-35), (5) Alliance with the Gibeonites (9:1-27), (6) Conquest of southern Canaan (10:1-43), (7) Conquest of northern Canaan (11:1-15), (8) Summary of battles and victories (11:16 – 12:24)

Chapter 6
CONQUEST OF JERICHO

6:1-5 God gave Joshua the military strategy for taking Jericho. The manner by which Israel was to take the city required faith. Once the strategy was carried out, and the victory secured, faith in God's work through the army of Israel would be strengthened in order to continue other conquests of Canaan. Since these instructions came to the army of Israel through the inspiration of Joshua, Joshua was reaffirmed to be God's leader of Israel. Joshua's affirmation to be God's designated leader was again confirmed because the taking of the city was a miraculous event.

6:6-11 ***Circle the city:*** We must be reminded here why this city and others in Canaan were being judged. They had digressed into sin to the point of no moral return. Their destruction was God's "in time" judgment by the proxy of Israel's army. The inhabitants of the land had given up their right to life because of the degradation of their lives. They could no longer dwell among men because they, as Sodom and Gomorrah, had digressed into sin to the point of no moral return (See comments Gn 15:16). This may be a possible explanation why Rahab was a harlot, not simply an innkeeper. As a single woman, she was forced into harlotry because of the moral degradation of the men among whom she had to survive. As the homosexual men of Sodom and Gomorrah sought to have sexual relations with the three men from God during the time of Abraham, so Rahab was forced to succumb to harlotry to survive in Jericho (See Gn 19:1-11). However, her faith survived and we are left today with the legacy of her faith (Hb 11:31; Js 2:25). But when cultures become so morally degraded that they force the innocent to conform to their moral degradation, then they are cultures that should reap the judgment of God that was poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah.

6:12-21 ***Circled ... seven times:*** God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The circling of the city by the army of Israel gave the inhabitants of Jericho a warning and opportunity to repent (Ez 33:1; see Ez 18:23,32). ***Sound of the trumpet:*** This was a ram's horn. It had no musical value and was used exclusively to summon the people. The people of Jericho understood the meaning of the blowing of the ram's horn. It was a summons to war. Thus the inhabitants of Jericho were reminded that Israel was outside their walls for the purpose of

taking the city. ***Consecrated to the Lord:*** Other translations may read "devoted" or "accursed." When something was consecrated (devoted) to God, it belonged to God and was to be used to implement His work among men. In this case, the gold, silver, and vessels of brass and iron were to be given to the tabernacle service (vs 19). Some consecrated things were to be destroyed in order that God's work be carried out. What could not be destroyed was put in service for the work of God. What was to be destroyed, was to be taken out of the way in order that the purpose of God continue. All that was Jericho, the inhabitants, possessions and buildings, were the firstfruits of the cities of Canaan, and thus were to be consecrated to God. ***Utterly destroy:*** Young and old, male and female and all animals were to be killed (See also Dt 13:6-18; 17:1-7). The reason for this total annihilation was the fulfillment of Genesis 15:16. The iniquity of the Amorites (Canaanites) was now full. Even children who had grown up in such a society of total moral degradation would become lost. It would be better for them to die a physical death in their youth, than to grow up in such an immoral and hostile environment. At the time, the Israelites had only enough provisions for themselves and their children. They had no crops, for they were eating the "old corn (maize)." They could not possibly have taken on hundreds, and possibly thousands of orphaned children. If they had, even their survival would have been compromised. The higher law of God in this context was the survival of Israel to bring the Savior of the world. With this understanding, therefore, we know why it was necessary that all the inhabitants of Jericho should die. Anything that would hinder the work of God among men in this case was to be removed.

6:22-25 In the midst of such great destruction, mercy was given to the only one in the city who had shown faith in God. By faith, not only Rahab, but her entire family was spared. The point is that one's faith can lead to the salvation of others who trust in the works of the faithful. Because she acted on her faith, young Rahab's legacy was one of faith (See Mt 1:5; Hb 11:31; Js 2:25). ***She dwells in Israel:*** Rahab could have fled to one of the neighboring cities. But because she recognized that Israel was the people of God, she chose to dwell among the Israelites. She was still there at the time the book of Joshua was written, identifying the fact that she was given a long life, for she lived after the death of Joshua and died after the book of Joshua was written. She apparently developed a home of believers with Salmon, of whom she gave birth to Boaz (Mt 1:5; see Rt 4:21). Ruth, from Boaz, gave birth to Obed. Through Obed came Jesse, the father of David, through whom the Messiah eventually was born into the world.

6:26,27 ***Cursed is the man:*** If any would seek to rebuild Jericho he would be cursed with the death of his firstborn and lastborn. This curse was fulfilled when Hiel, during the reign of Ahab, rebuilt the city (1 Kg 16:34). Several archaeological studies have been made of the site of Jericho. It has been proved that the city remained in ruins from the time of its destruction in this context until the 9th century when Hiel rebuilt it. Since the time Hiel rebuilt it, it was destroyed and rebuilt several times. ***His fame:*** As a military leader who sought to do the will of God, Joshua's fame spread rapidly throughout the land of Canaan. The destruction of Jericho was so pronounced that the news of the utter destruction of the city struck fear in the hearts of the inhabitants of Canaan. The reaction of the Canaanites explains why God destroyed the city in the manner that He did. The report of the destruction, therefore, gave the other inhabitants of the land time to flee from the land of Canaan. Unfortunately, they did not flee, and subsequently, many suffered the same fate as Jericho.

Chapter 7
THE DEFEAT AT AI

7:1-5 ***Israelites acted unfaithfully:*** Though only one person sinned in the camp of Israel, the entire nation had to suffer. The nation suffered a humiliating defeat before the army of Ai. Achan had taken that which was consecrated (devoted) for destruction (See 6:17-19). ***Ai ... smote their men:*** Achan's sin cost the lives of about 36 soldiers of the Israelite army. Though Joshua sent 3,000 soldiers against Ai, their attack, minus God's help, meant sure defeat. ***The hearts of the people melted:*** Israel's defeat reaffirmed the fact that they could do nothing in their conquest of Canaan without the help of God. It also reaffirmed that they must in every way submit to the will of God as it was delivered to them through the mouth of Joshua.

7:6-9 It is obvious that Joshua did not know why his army was defeated. We thus do not know the intent of his prayer. It seems to be a prayer of complaint in ignorance of why Israel's army was punished (Compare Ex 5:22,23; 14:11,12; Nm 11:11-15; 14:2,3). Nevertheless, the prayer of Joshua and the elders indicates that they still had faith in God to work according to His promise. ***Amorites:*** This was a common term used to refer to all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

7:10-15 ***Get up:*** In this statement it seems that God was stating that they should stop whining in prayer and get about the business of rectifying the problem of sin in the camp. Good leaders do not complain to God about those things they can take care of themselves. ***Israel has sinned:*** Joshua and the leaders should have assumed that something was wrong before they went to the Lord in prayer. Instead of complaints in prayer, they should have reexamined themselves, assuming that any defeat of their army meant that something was wrong with them, not God. God will not bless those who live in sin. Though one would claim the name of God, there is no blessing when one persists in living contrary to the will of God. A thief who steals will not be blessed by God with the possessions he has stolen. In this case, though only one committed the transgression, the entire nation was held accountable for breaking the conditions of the covenant. The judgment meant, therefore, that the entire nation had stolen that which was consecrated to God. ***Unless you destroy:*** Israel's allegiance to the covenant depended on her strict obedience to that which was here commanded by God to rectify the problem. Achan had humiliated his family and embarrassed his nation. And by doing so he violated the conditions of obedience to the law of the covenant. As an example to the rest of the nation, therefore, he and his family had to die.

7:16-21 ***Joshua rose up early:*** When godly leaders realize

the will of God, they take immediate action. There is no time to sleep in when the work of God has to be done. ***Give glory to the Lord:*** True confession comes only when one acknowledges God as the Lord of his life. Upon the basis of his own confession, Achan pronounced his judgment. In his confession he admitted that he yielded to his own lusts. He saw, coveted and took that which was consecrated to the Lord.

7:22-26 Achan and Israel learned that possessions do not bring blessings from God. God's blessing comes only through holy living. Also in this case, Israel learned that as a nation no one citizen lived unto himself (See Rm 14:7). The sin of one man cost the lives of his family and the lives of 36 warriors of Israel. Though Achan thought his sin was hidden from God, he realized that the all-knowing God will bring judgment on those who think that they can secretly commit sin. ***All Israel stoned him:*** This surely was a difficult time in the lives of those Israelites who had to cast the stones. With joy they had come across the Jordan. With joy they had destroyed Jericho. But here they had to stone one of their own. This was certainly not an easy decision on the part of Joshua, or an easy thing for Israel to do. However, in all of what transpired here we see the evidence of a people who sought to do the will of the Lord in every detail. Their fear of the Lord was greater than their concern for a fellow Israelite. And such it should be when the Lord asks the church to disfellowship one who brings sin into the camp of God (See comments 2 Th 3:6-9). Keeping the command of God to disfellowship is more important than fellowshipping one who persists on living in sin. The reason for this is that the sinner will influence others to also live in sin.

Chapter 8
DESTRUCTION OF AI

8:1-8 It was now time for action. Sin had been purged from Israel. ***30,000:*** Instead of 3,000 soldiers as previously sent, Joshua made sure that Ai was taken. By choosing this great number of soldiers, he possibly showed some doubt, or at least he wanted his men to be reassured that what happened before in their attack of AI did not happen again. ***Spoil for yourselves:*** Jericho had been consecrated to the Lord since it was the first city of the Canaanites to be destroyed. But now, Israel was to replenish her supplies by taking the spoils of Ai. ***Ambush:*** Though God had given Ai into the hands of Israel, this did not mean that Israel was to ignore proper military strategy, which strategy the Lord gave to Joshua. The strategy of the ambush worked because of the overconfidence of the inhabitants of Ai. They assumed that Israel would flee before them as they did during the first battle.

8:9-29 In this destruction we must assume that God wanted Ai to be a testimony to the rest of the Canaanite cities that Israel was His people. In the second attack on Ai not one of the inhabitants of the city was left alive to tell the rest of the Canaanites that the army of Ai had initially defeated the army of Israel. Only the Israelites knew of the initial defeat, which news they would surely not broadcast throughout Canaan. We know of the initial defeat only because of the book of Joshua, which book was written after Israel had taken the land. But the report of the initial defeat was never known to the rest of the Canaanites at the time unless the people of Ai were able to send out messengers immediately after the battle. But because they were totally annihilated in the second battle, no Canaanite city would become overconfident in their wars with Israel. The Canaanites were defeated morally by news of the total destruction of Ai, and then physically as the army of Israel destroyed the cities of Canaan one by one.

READING OF THE LAW

8:30-35 ***Altar ... on Mount Ebal:*** This mountain is about 45 kilometers (35 miles) north of Ai. It could be that Joshua and Israel made this journey immediately after the fall of Ai. It was a journey into enemy territory in order to build this altar. However, it could be that the building of the altar is mentioned here from the viewpoint of the writer of the book of Joshua. It was not actually built until after Israel had secured the area around Mt. Ebal several years later (See 24:1-28). Centuries before, God had promised Abraham that He would give the land to his descendants (Gn 12:1-3). As a result of the promise, Abraham built an altar to the Lord (Gn 12:6-7). At this time in the history of Israel, Joshua built the first altar in the land, signifying that God had fulfilled His promise to Abraham.

Chapter 9
ALLIANCE WITH THE GIBEONITES

9:1,2 ***All the kings ... gathered themselves together:*** This was an opportunity for Israel. Instead of taking Canaan city by city, victory over a coalition of kings would make it possible to take large sections of the land at one time. This was not a time for fear (See Ps 2:4,5; 37:1,2; Is 54:17). It was a time for courage, an opportunity for God to work in the lives of the Israelites in order to prove that no coalition of kings could defeat them.

9:3-15 ***The inhabitants of Gibeon:*** Gibeon is located about 10 kilometers (6 miles) northwest of Jerusalem. The Gibeonites were knowledgeable of the work of God through Israel. They thus realized their desperate situation. They schemed, therefore, to make some alliance with the Israelites whom they believed would defeat them in any battle. ***Gilgal:*** We do not know which Gilgal is here identified. It could be the Gilgal that was recently established by the circumcision of the Israelite men (See 5:8,9). It could be the Gilgal near Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (See Dt 11:30; 1 Sm 7:16; 10:8; 11:14; 13:1,8; 15:33). If the Mt. Ebal near Mt. Gerizim is where Joshua actually took Israel in order to build a memorial altar, then we would assume that the Gilgal near Mt. Gerizim is the correct city. This would possibly be the case since Joshua would want to move the nation of Israel into a central location in the land of Palestine in order to establish as soon as possible a dominant presence in the land. ***We are your servants:*** Though wise in his military dealings, Joshua was still deceived by the Gibeonites. He was deceived into thinking that they were not inhabitants of the land of promise, but people who were only traveling through the region.

9:16-21 ***Made a covenant with them:*** Before discovering all the facts concerning the origins and intentions of the

Gibeonites, the leaders of Israel made a covenant with them that they could not break. This incident explains how binding covenants were among the Israelites, a people who were good for their word. When considering the deception of the Gibeonites, we must keep in mind that one of the missions of Israel was to convert the nations. They were a nation of priests for God's service to the rest of the world. Though under a cloud of deception, the Gibeonites were Israel's first converts in the land of Palestine.

9:22-27 ***Why have you deceived us:*** The covenant that Israel made with the Gibeonites was binding. However, it was based on the false premises of one of the parties, the Gibeonites. For this reason, the covenant remained, but the party that instigated the deception was brought under the bondage of the party that was deceived. The Gibeonites became the bondservants of Israel. ***The assembly murmured against the princes:*** The responsibility of leadership is to lead through wise choices. In this case, leadership failed, and thus the people complained against their leaders for bringing them into a covenant with people of the Canaanites. Keep in mind that the leaders had acted in good faith, but were deceived. Unfortunately, they had acted alone before consulting the Lord. ***The house of my God:*** The Gibeonites' service would be centered around the tabernacle and its function among the people. They would be the bondservants of the priests who carried out their ministry for Israel (Compare 2 Sm 21:1,2). Joshua wisely turned a bad situation into something good. The princes had agreed to a bad covenant. However, the Gibeonites were consigned to a functional part of the tabernacle ministry of Israel. The lives of the Gibeonites were spared and servants were added to the administration of the tabernacle service. We assume that the Gibeonites did not have this in mind when they initiated the deception. They wanted to live, but surely not at the price of consigning their future generations to being servants. Some want to become members of the body of Christ and live off the freewill food of the brethren. However, the cost of membership is that everyone must work (2 Th 3:10). There are those who know where to go for survival, but they must understand the price that they must give is work. There is no free ride among God's servants.

Chapter 10
CONQUEST OF SOUTHERN CANAAN

10:1-5 Since the city of the Gibeonites was one of the principal cities of Canaan, the rest of the cities were in great fear when they learned that the Gibeonites realized they could not stand against Israel. Adonizedek thus organized a coalition of kings in order that they together stand against Israel.

10:6-15 ***Do not abandon your servants:*** The Gibeonites had given themselves over to the God of Israel. As a result, their former friends turned against them. Their faith in the God of Israel brought an immediate threat from their former friends. However, they quickly realized that their allegiance with Israel and God had its benefits. They were to be protected by the army of Israel against those who had turned against them. ***The Lord ... slew them:*** Israel's army was God's proxy judgment against the morally degraded nations that dwelt within Canaan. The biblical historian must not forget that God is not only giving Israel a land in which to dwell to bring forth the Messiah, but also bringing "in time" judgment on those who had forsaken Him by going after their own religious imaginations. The Canaanites had given up their right to exist because of their moral degradation. Their wickedness had at this time in history brought forth the judgment of God (See comments Gn 13:16). ***Great stones from heaven:*** In this case, God used natural forces to bring calamity upon those who had given up on God and created wicked behavior after their own desires (See Jg 5:20). Great hailstones killed more of the enemies of Israel than the Israelite army. ***O sun, stand still:*** There is no scientific explanation for this. True miracles have no scientific explanation simply because a miracle is a supernatural occurrence outside the realm of the scientific method of study. Lest in our weak faith we accuse the Bible of being frivolous in recording such an event, we must realize that the God who created all things could certainly bring about this event. God answered this prayer of Joshua, not only for the army of Israel in its defeat of the enemies of God, but also for the purpose of testing the faith of those who say they believe in God. A god that could not do what Joshua requested in this prayer would certainly be a god that was the invention of our imaginations. But the one true and living God who created all things could certainly perform according to His omnipotence in stopping the rotation of the earth. Keep in mind that the request was made from the viewpoint of man, not God. Since the earth rotates on its own axis, then it was the earth's rotation that was stopped. ***No day like that before it or after:*** God uses miracles sparingly among His people. The more miracles that would occur in the lives of believers, the weaker their faith would become (See comments Jn 20:26-31). For this reason, therefore, God has not worked such miracles as this since the days of Joshua.

10:16-27 ***Put your feet on the necks of these kings:*** This was a show of conquest. The gesture here was for the encouragement of his men. These kings had arrogantly taken up arms in a coalition against the God of Israel. With a great army of soldiers they had sought to defeat Israel. But at this moment, they were on the ground with their necks under the feet of Israel's soldiers. Joshua wanted to encourage his soldiers by illustrating that no king or coalition of kings would be able to stand against them. Any resistance on the part of the Canaanites would only lead to their destruction.

10:28-39 This is an account of Israel's conquest of the southern region of the land of Palestine. More than one conquest is here recorded. The purpose behind the conquest of these wicked nations must never be forgotten. God was cleansing the land of evil. He was purifying a land for the settlement of the Israelites, from whom would come the Messiah into the world. The wicked nations had earned their destruction by their total deviation from the righteousness of God (See Rm 11:22). The proxy judgment of God upon these nations was thus just. They had their opportunity of obedience to the true and living God. Unfortunately, their desire to create gods after their own imaginations and religious desires that catered to the moral degradation of their hearts earned them the judgment

that was meted out by the army of Israel (See Lv 18:24,25; Dt 9:5; 18:9,12).

10:40-43 Israel completely defeated those cities and peoples that are herein mentioned. However, we must also understand that the areas outside the region of their conquests, but still within the boundaries that God had given them as the promise land, were still unconquered and thus inhabited by the Canaanites. This is revealed by the fact that the Anakims remained in the Gaza area (11:22; 13:2,3). The Jebusites continued to remain in Jerusalem (15:63). At the end of his leadership in the conquest of the land, Joshua exhorted the individual tribes of Israel to continue the cleansing of the land by defeating the remaining peoples within their allotted territories (23:12). In the period of the Israelite wars against the Canaanites, we must understand that there was a period of national war and a period of tribal war. Under the leadership of Joshua, national conquests were initially realized in order that the tribal groups settle in their possessions. Once settled, they were to begin the planting and harvesting of their crops in order to sustain themselves. Once there was peace from the national wars, the individual tribes had the responsibility to continue their wars against the Canaanites in order to rid their individually allotted possessions of any Canaanite inhabitants. Joshua succeeded in bringing victory for Israel in the period of the national wars. Unfortunately, the individual tribes failed in their efforts to completely rid their tribal possessions of the Canaanites. The book of Joshua is about the success of Israel in her national wars against the Canaanites. The book of Judges is about the failure of the tribes in their wars against the Canaanites in their tribal territories. It seems that when Joshua and his God-dependent leadership ceased, the leadership of the individual tribes forsook the success of having God direct their leadership in continuing regional victories over the Canaanites.

Chapter 11

CONQUEST OF NORTHERN CANAAN

11:1-5 The location of Meron is not certain. But it was here that another united force of kings came against Israel. In a desperate situation, these kings thought that they had an advantage over the kings of the south in that they were a united coalition greater in number than the kings of the south. It seems that they were more equipped with horses and chariots, thus were more experienced in warfare. Regardless of the fall of the kings of the south, they unfortunately arrogantly trusted in their military strength.

11:6-15 ***Do not be afraid:*** When we are encouraged with these words from God, nothing will stand against us (See Rm 8:31,37). In this case, the great enemy of the coalition of northern kings was easily subdued before Israel. ***Hock their horses:*** This was the cutting of the main tendon above the ankle of the horses. The cutting of this tendon made the horse useless, for the horse could not walk. ***Suddenly:*** It seems that before the northern kings could fully organize into a fighting force, Joshua attacked. ***Burned their chariots:*** Israel had no need for either horses or chariots in Israel's warfare. The Israelites were strictly a guerilla army of soldiers who were more mobile than horses and chariots that could not be used to launch a secret attack in either mountains or forests. The horses and chariots were limited to the plains, and thus were of no use to the army of Israel who could launch attacks from places where chariots could not go. ***Hazor:*** This was the king over the evil forces of the north. Joshua removed him and the other kings from society. Such kings are often unrepentant, and thus if left alive would have continually been a thorn in the flesh of Israel. ***Cities built on their mounds:*** These were well-fortified cities since they were built on the hilltops. In such positions they were difficult to be conquered by enemies (See 8:28; Dt 13:16; Jr 30:18). ***He left nothing undone:*** Such should be the legacy of a true servant of God. When one understands his destiny for God, and performs to the best of his ability, then he leaves nothing undone that the Lord would expect of him. From this statement, therefore, we conclude that Joshua accomplished what God intended for him to do in reference to the national wars of Israel against the Canaanites. It was now time for the tribes to assume the responsibility of defeating the Canaanites within their own allotted territories. As the book of Judges will confirm, they failed in this responsibility.

SUMMARY OF BATTLES AND VICTORIES

11:16-20 The extent of Israel's national conquests was from the land of Goshen in Egypt to Mt. Hermon in the north. All the land from the Mediterranean Sea to just east of the Jordan River fell under the control of Israel. Though Israel at the time was not large enough as a nation to settle and secure all this land, Joshua conquered enough of the land in order that the Israelite tribes individually continue to cleanse their own territories. ***Harden their hearts:*** When men with evil hearts are confronted with the will of the Lord, they willingly harden themselves against the Lord. In this way the Lord hardens men's hearts. The Lord will take credit for presenting the occasion for one to harden his heart against His will. He takes credit by presenting the opportunity for the arrogant and rebellious to harden their hearts. In this way the justice of God stands in that it is man who brings upon himself the judgment of God by hardening his heart against God's will (See Dt 2:30; Jg 14:4; 1 Sm 2:25; 1 Kg 12:15; 2 Ch 25:16,20).

11:21-23 ***Anakims:*** These were the giants who brought fear to Israel when they were camped at Kadesh Barnea immediately after leaving Mt. Sinai (See Nm 13:33; 14:1,2,9; Dt 9:2). ***The land rested from war:*** This was the end of the national wars of the united tribes of Israel. All remaining efforts to cleanse the allotted homelands were left to the individual tribes. Joshua succeeded in his national leadership, but the leadership of the individual tribes failed to completely rid their territories of the Canaanites.

Chapter 12

12:1-24 This chapter is a review of all the kings who were conquered during the years of Israel's national wars. In the list, the kings are mentioned, but not specifically the land over which they ruled. It was assumed that the land over which the kings ruled fell into the hands of Israel. But in this ac-

count the review of kings is a focus on any legacy such kings might leave in reference to their strength. The strength of a nation resides in its leadership. Israel destroyed the leadership of these nations, and thus the evidence of God working in Israel was manifested by Israel's victory over the strongest leaders that mankind could produce. No leadership of this world has any chance of victory when God has determined that that leadership should be terminated. It is God who sets up leadership, and it is God who takes it down (See comments Rm 13:1-7). This record of defeated kings, therefore, stood as a testimony to the future generations of Israel. The victories over these kings would be a testimony to later generations that God fought for Israel in order to settle the tribes of Israel in the land. He fought for them in order to fulfill the promises that He made to their forefathers centuries before (Gn 15:13-21; see Dt 32:7-9).

Allotting Of The Promised Land
(13:1 – 24:33)

Outline: (1) Future battles and inheritances (13:1-6), (2) Inheritances east of the Jordan (13:7-33), (3) Inheritances west of the Jordan (14:1 – 19:51), (4) Cities of refuge (20:1-9), (5) Cities for priests and Levites (21:1-45), (6) Return of the eastern tribes (22:1-34), (7) Joshua's farewell address (23:1 – 24:33)

Chapter 13
FUTURE BATTLES AND INHERITANCES

13:1-6 ***Much land remains to be possessed:*** The Philistines still possessed some territory in the southwest regions and the Phoenicians were still in the northwest. It was the responsibility of the tribes who settled in these regions to complete the dispossession of the Philistines and Phoenicians. Joshua had led Israel all his life in cleansing the land of evil kings. But his life was coming to an end at this time. He was successful in his God-appointed mission of leading national Israel in the cleansing of the land. It was now the responsibility of the local leadership of the individual tribes to complete what he had started. ***Drive them out:*** In his old age, Joshua was now the administrator, not the general at the head of Israel's national army. The initial beachheads for the continued struggle to drive out the inhabitants of the land of Palestine would continue through local leadership and individual tribal armies. At this time in the life of Joshua, however, he was to allot the land in order that the tribes settle and begin their planting and harvesting to support themselves with their own crops. They could no longer live off the spoils of their victories. They had to plant and harvest for their own preservation. The allotting of the territories also assumed that the individual tribes assumed their responsibility to further cleanse the Canaanites from the territories they were allotted.

INHERITANCES EAST OF THE JORDAN

13:7-33 Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh were given inheritances east of the Jordan (See Nm 21:24; 31:8). The settlement of the tribes began a new chapter in the history of Israel. Israel's captivity in Egypt ended at the Rea Sea. Their journey in the wilderness ended at the crossing of the Jordan. And now they passed through the years of national war against the inhabitants of the land. They were at this time to settle down in the land, and then completely rid their territories of lingering Canaanite inhabitants. Their settlement in the land was to continue for several centuries, to the time God would bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. We would assume that God would immediately bring this Blessing into the world that He had promised to Abraham in fulfillment of the Genesis 3:15 prophecy. But God was not finished with the nation of Israel who would give birth to the Savior of the world. Israel needed centuries more of discipline from the Lord in order to be prepared to give birth to the Messiah. Throughout the remainder of the history of Israel, God patiently prepared them for this coming event. God is patient. We see His patience in the fact that He was willing to work with Israel for around 1,300 years more before a star appeared over Bethlehem. When it appeared, the fullness of the times had come to the world (See comments Gl 4:4). Would the Messiah have come earlier if Israel had fully obeyed God and cleansed the land of all the Canaanites? We will not know the answer to this question in this world. Unfortunately, Israel did not obey the will of God in cleansing the land, and thus for centuries they had to go through the discipline of the Lord in order to be morally prepared to receive the Messiah. ***Balaam:*** See Nm 22–24 (24:9,10; Ne 13:2 Mc 6:5; 2 Pt 2:15; Jd 11; Rv 2:14). ***Levi:*** This tribe received no inheritance of land since the Lord was their inheritance. Their work was to minister to the spiritual needs of Israel in teaching and administering sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. They were thus relieved of dealing with things of the world in order to focus all their attention on the spiritual needs of the nation of Israel.

Chapter 14
INHERITANCES WEST OF THE JORDAN

14:1-5 ***By lot their inheritance was assigned:*** Moses had been given by God general instructions for the tribes west of the Jordan (See Nm 34:1-12). At the end of the national wars, the inheritance was to be given out by lots (Nm 26:55; 33:54; 34:13). We assume, therefore, that the allotments were given out by the guidance of God in the choosing of lots, and thus each tribe was assured that their inheritance was chosen by God and not man (Compare Pv 16:33). ***No part to the Levites:*** In order to guarantee their separation from the rest of the tribes for service to God on behalf of the tribes, the Levites were given no inheritance of land. Instead of the Levites being confined to a specific inheritance, they were to be scattered throughout the land in order to carry out their duties to minister to the spiritual needs of the people. Only cities were given to the Levities. These cities were scattered throughout the land. In this way the people could come to the cities for the spiritual ministry of the Levites.

14:6-15 ***Caleb:*** All that Caleb said of himself in this context defines the behavior of a faithful and loyal person (See Nm 13:30; 14:6-9). ***Kenezite:*** Caleb came from an Edomite family that came from Eliphaz, Esau's son (Gn 36:11,15,42). He was not an Israelite by birth, but associated with Israel as a result of the Kenezite family associating themselves with Is-

rael because of their belief in the one true God. His faith was manifested in the fact that when he came back with Joshua, after the two were sent out from Mt. Sinai as spies, he came back and said that Israel could take the land. Unfortunately, Israel did not believe this Kenezite and Joshua, and subsequently the nation was cursed with 38 years of wandering in the wilderness. ***The Lord has kept me alive:*** Caleb was a young man when he was sent out as a spy. He lived throughout the years of wilderness wandering. And now he has lived throughout the years of the Canaan conquest. He was at this time an old man because God had kept him alive as a result of his former faithfulness. ***Give me this mountain:*** Caleb did not seek a quiet valley in which to retire. He asked for the strong cities in which the Anakims still dwelt. His battles were not over. He knew that with the help of God he would prevail over the Anakims. He is at least one example of one tribal leader who continued the cleansing of the promised land. ***He wholly followed the Lord:*** No greater legacy could have been stated of a man. He was totally committed to obedience to the Lord (See comments Gl 2:20).

Chapter 15

15:1-63 The difficulty in establishing the tribal boundaries that are mentioned in this context is that many of the cities that are mentioned no longer exist. Archaeologists have discovered the remains of some, but many are yet to be discovered. It is not important to us to know the exact boundaries. What is important for us is that this allotment of inheritances for the tribes of Israel was carried out by the will of God and in fulfillment of God's promise to Israel. The land inheritances were important to the people of Israel in order that they have a possession of land to pass on to their children. Israel never had ownership of land throughout their history and the history of their forefathers. From the time of the call of Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, to the crossing of the Jordan, Israel never had a land they could call their own. In giving them the land of Canaan, God wanted Israel to settle down in order that He might work with them to bring the Messiah into the world. As a nation, they were not the priority in God's eternal plan. The nation of Israel was only a means to an eternal plan. God's plan was to use the nation of Israel to bring about redemption through the Son of God. Though at the time Israel did not understand this, the giving of the land as their possession was for an eternal purpose that would offer salvation to all men. Once the eternal purpose was fulfilled, then the land promise would be completed. Israel had possession of the land only because they dwelt in it at the time of the fulfillment of the promise of the Savior of the world. Their divine right to the land, therefore, ended when the promise was fulfilled. ***As for the Jebusites:*** In Joshua 3:10 God said that the Jebusites would be driven out. However, strongholds as Jerusalem, which was occupied by the Jebusites, were not dispossessed of their inhabitants until many years later (See 2 Sm 5:6,7). The Jebusites, therefore, were driven out, but not at this time in the history of Israel. At the time of initial possession, the nation of Israel was not large enough in population to take control of all the land. At the time Joshua completed the national wars for the initial possession, there was enough land for all Israel. As the population of the nation grew, the individual tribes would be able to possess all the land that God had given them. In His promise, God had given them the right to have possession of enough land until the coming of the Messiah which would happen over 1,300 years after this time of initial possession. The national army of Israel secured the initial possession. It was the responsibility of the individual tribes to secure the rest of the land that was within their individual allotments as tribes.

Chapter 16

16:1-10 ***Manasseh and Ephraim:*** These two tribes originated from the sons of Joseph, to whom Jacob gave a special blessing that they would be legally ranked with Jacob's sons in reference to the allotment of land (Gn 48:5-19). Their special blessing, therefore, gave them a right to an inheritance of land. Their allotment of land included some of the most fertile land of Palestine which was situated in the heartland of the region. ***They did not drive out the Canaanites:*** This was a failure in leadership on the part of the individual tribes, and thus the beginning of the end of Israel's occupation of the land. It was a beginning that would eventually lead to their temporary eradication from the land through the Assyrian (721/22 B.C.) and Babylonian (586 B.C.) captivities. Though at the initial time of occupation of the land the Canaanites serviced the tribes by paying tribute, the cultural influence of the Canaanites eventually corrupted the morals of Israel, and thus moved God to cleanse Israel once again by driving Israel into captivity (See Hs 4:17; 7:8,11; 11:12; 12:1,14; 14:4,8). In their joy to secure their inheritance at this time, the people of Ephraim failed to obey the will of God by eradicating the Canaanites from their allotted land. Their sin eventually led to their moral corruption, and their moral corruption led to the judgment of God. This scenario played itself out with every tribal group of Israel.

Chapter 17

17:1,2 ***Manasseh:*** Because Manasseh was the firstborn of Joseph, his tribal group was able to have special blessings in the allotment of the land. This was also true because Machir, the firstborn of Manasseh, was a valiant soldier.

17:3-6 ***Zelophehad:*** This is the fulfillment of a promise made to the daughters of Zelophehad through Moses (See Nm 27:6-11). Because Zelophehad had no sons through whom the allotment of land could be made and inherited, in fairness, God commanded that the daughters of Zelophehad receive an allotment of land to which they had legal rights. Regardless of who these daughters married, the inheritance of their possession would continue through their names, and not the names of their husbands.

17:7-13 ***The children of Manasseh could not drive out ... the Canaanites:*** Since God promised on the condition of each tribe's faithfulness, that He would fight for the tribes of Israel to drive out the remaining inhabitants (3:10), we must assume that there was some sin in the camp of Manasseh that left them on their own in their confrontation with the Canaanites. As

with the sin of Achan, God would not fight with the army of Manasseh because there was sin in his camp. They became powerless with the sin among them. In time, and with the help of the other tribes, they were able to subdue the Canaanites in their territory. However, they failed to eradicate them completely from the land. As a result, the wicked Canaanite culture eventually influenced the tribe of Manasseh as it did the other tribes who also failed to cleanse their inheritances of the wicked Canaanites.

17:14-18 ***The children of Joseph:*** These complained about their allotment. However, Joshua wisely answered them with a question concerning their inability to drive out the Canaanites from the land they were given. Their failure indicated that there was sin in their camp. Their possession would have been large enough if they had assumed their responsibility to eradicate the Canaanites from the totality of the land that they were given. The problem was not with the amount of land that they were given, but with their failure to assume their responsibility to drive out the Canaanites from that which they had been given. And in view of the fact that God had promised that He would be with those who would keep themselves faithful and continue the task of cleansing the land of the wicked culture of the Canaanites, we must assume that the children of Joseph continued to harbor sin within their camp. As with the recorded case of Israel's initial failure to conquer Ai, the leadership of the sons of Joseph should have looked to themselves, not to Joshua, in reference to what sin was in their camp.

Chapter 18

18:1-10 ***Assembly:*** The Septuagint uses the Greek word *ekklesia* to translate the equivalent Hebrew word in this context. It is the word "assembly." The word is normally translated "church" in the New Testament. This is the assembly of God in the Old Testament that is now gathered at the tabernacle. ***Set up the tabernacle:*** The tabernacle was never meant to be a place in which people assembled, but a mobile tent at which the people assembled to offer sacrifices. The tabernacle was not to be set up permanently in one location. It was to be moved among the tribal possessions in order that the people of any one tribe would never be permanently too far from the tabernacle (See 1 Ch 17:4-6). It was to be moved in order that Israel not establish any form of central government to control the affairs of all the tribes. As a nation, they were a theocracy, which meant that they were to look directly to God for direction, not to a central religious power established in one location in the country. Of course, when they rejected the direct leadership of God in the years to come, they sought for a king and a central place to locate the tabernacle, which led to the building of the temple. ***How long will you wait:*** The wars of the national army of Israel had ceased. The allotment of the land was to be made. It was now the responsibility of each tribe to continue cleansing their allotted lands of the Canaanite inhabitants. But seven tribes had lost their enthusiasm and were not continuing their responsibility of driving out the Canaanites from their allotted land.

18:11-28 Benjamin was always a small tribal group of Israel (See 1 Sm 9:21; Ps 68:27). They were known for being left handed (Jg 20:16). Within the allotted land for Benjamin were many famous cities that are known today. These were the cities of Jerusalem, Jericho, Bethel, Gibeon, Ramah and Mizpeh. Throughout the Old Testament there is mention of these cities in reference to major events and people.

Chapter 19

19:1-48 ***Simeon:*** We know little concerning the influence of this tribe in the history of Israel. It was prophesied that they would be scattered among the other tribes of Israel (See Gn 49:5-7). The territory for the tribe of Judah was too much for them to occupy at this time in history. Therefore, the tribe of Simeon took their inheritance within Judah's inheritance. Since it was the responsibility of each tribe to drive out the inhabitants of their allotted land, it seems that Judah needed help in doing this. They brought Simeon into the allotment of their inheritance in order to accomplish what they should have done for themselves. This point must be remembered later when studying the division of the land into the two nations of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel after the death of Solomon. Both the tribes of Simeon and Benjamin were included in Judah, which was called the southern kingdom of Israel. ***Zebulun:*** The possession of Zebulun was in the northern part of Palestine. The people of Zebulun were a warrior people, but were also a people who loved peace (See 1 Ch 12:33,40). It may have been that because they were a fierce people of war that others left them in peace. ***Issachar:*** This tribe received one of the most fertile parts of Palestine, the plains of Jezreel. Many famous battles throughout the history of Israel were fought in this area (See Jg 4:14; 7:1; 1 Sm 30). Also because of this location, they were tempted with the influences of cultures from the East and Egypt. They subsequently became a servant to foreign powers and paid tribute that was prophesied of them (Gn 49:14,15). ***Asher:*** Their territory was bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea (See Jg 5:17). Since they were located near the Phoenicians, from which they did not remain separate, they were later influenced by this wicked culture of people that led them from God (Jg 1:32). ***Naphtali:*** Naphtali also failed to drive out the Canaanites from their land (Jg 1:33). Their failure to complete the conquest of the land resulted in their being influenced by the wicked culture of the people. ***Dan:*** It seems that the tribe of Dan was forced initially to live in the mountains because the inhabitants of their allotted land would not allow them to come down into the valleys (Jg 1:34). However, they did take the area of Leshem, which they called Dan. This was fertile land for the growing of crops in the far northern region of Palestine. The territory is thus mentioned in the Old Testament as the northern boundary of the land of Palestine (See 2 Sm 3:10; 17:11; 24:2; 1 Kg 4:25; 2 Ch 30:5). As the other tribes, Dan was also eventually affected by the wicked cultures of the people they failed to drive out of their land (See Jg 18:30; 1 Kg 12:28-30; 2 Kg 10:29; Am 8:14).

19:49-51 Once the inheritances had been allotted to all the tribes according to the will of the Lord, the Israelites determined that Joshua would have an inheritance in the middle of

Palestine. He had asked for a particular area, and according to the word of the Lord, Israel willingly gave him that for which he asked. Such was the character of Joshua. He made sure that others were first served, and then he allowed himself to be served last. After Joshua had been given his territory, then the allotments of land to all Israel had been accomplished. This was the final fulfillment of the land promise that God had made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. God had kept His promise, and now it was time for Israel to settle down in hope of the Messiah. Their faith must be in the fact that God would keep His promises.

Chapter 20
CITIES OF REFUGE

20:1-9 ***Kedesh ... Shechem ... Kirjath Arba (*Hebron*):*** These were the refuge cities on the west side of the Jordan River. ***Bezer ... Ramoth ... Golan:*** These were the refuge cities on the east side of the Jordan that serviced Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. Refuge cities were designated as places to which offenders could flee until a proper trial was conducted (See comments Ex 21:13; Nm 35:9-15; Dt 19:2-10). These cities were chosen out of the cities that were given to the Levites, and thus those who would judge the offenses, the Levities, already resided in these cities. If an offender fled to one of these cities, he first had to stand at the gate of the city in the presence of the elders and declare the reason why he should be accepted into the city for protection. In his declaration he had to prove that he did not have murderous intent in the death of another person. If, however, it was judged that the offender did have murderous intent, he was to be delivered to the avenger or to the kinsmen of the one who was killed. If he were guilty of manslaughter, or the unintentional death of another, then he was to reside in the refuge city until the death of the high priest. The designation of the refuge cities indicates that God recognizes that there is a difference between premeditated murder and accidental (culpable) homicide (manslaughter). He also wants the offender protected from the revenge of the family of the person who was killed if the offender did not intentionally kill someone. Flight to the refuge cities, and the protection of the offender, gave time for tempers to settle before judgment was issued. The refuge cities in Israel assumed that God wanted Israel to take the responsibility of rendering judgment. These cities of refuge and judgment, therefore, were courts of the land in reference to the death of any person.

Chapter 21
CITIES FOR PRIESTS & LEVITES

21:1-42 ***Heads of the fathers of the Levites:*** The Levites were promised no land inheritance in Palestine. However, they were promised cities and the pasture lands around these cities for their flocks (See Nm 1:47-53; 3:6-13; 8:5-22). These cities were scattered among the tribes of Israel in order that the Levites be available to everyone (Nm 35:1-8). The Levitical clans of Kohath, Gershon and Merari settled in the northern region of Palestine and on the eastern side of the Jordan. The clan of Aaron resided in the territory of Benjamin, Judah and Simeon. It was the responsibility of each tribe to designate those cities within their territory that would be given to the Levites. Because these cities were chosen by lot, we assume that God made the final decision as to what cities were to be designated. Since the cities were already built by the Canaanites who once dwelt in them, God's choice of the cities by lot did not give anyone an opportunity to complain against the Levites or anyone else concerning the cities that were chosen.

21:43-45 The land had been subdued, though not all the inhabitants had been either killed or driven out of the possessions of each tribal group. Those Canaanites who remained at this time in the land had been subjected to servitude and tribute. At this time in their history Israel had all the land they could possess, but they did not possess all the land that God made available to them. As they grew in population as a nation, they would later expand into more of the land that God had promised to them. The fact that they settled in the land reaffirmed the faithfulness of God in His promise to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Though God took from the time of Abraham, around 2000 B.C., to the time of the occupation (around 1350 B.C.), to bring Israel into Palestine, He remained true to His promise. God is not slack concerning His promises. The fulfillment of what He states He will do is not subject to time. His promises will be fulfilled according to His time.

Chapter 22
RETURN OF THE EASTERN TRIBES

22:1-9 ***Observe the commandment:*** Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had loyally served in securing territory for the other tribes of Israel. As they returned to their territory on the eastern side of the Jordan, Joshua exhorted them to remain loyal to the law of God. As with the other tribes of Israel, once they were settled in their land and were at rest from conflicts with the Canaanites, they would seek to do that which was right in their own eyes. But they were not to forget to do the commandments of the Lord in order that they remain in the land and continue to drive out the Canaanites (See Dt 6:5; 10:12; 11:13). If they would do according to the exhortation of verse 5, they would remain true to God and God would work for them in order that they prosper in the land. Spoil: See Nm 31:27; 1 Sm 30:24.

22:10-20 ***Altar ... war:*** Misunderstandings lead to numerous conflicts. As the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh returned home, they constructed a large altar on the west side of the Jordan as a memorial. They did so in order to remember that they were part of the tribes that resided on the west side of the Jordan. Unfortunately, the altar was constructed without the consultation of the other tribes. As a result, the other tribes assumed that Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had already been consumed with idol worship. If such were true, it would be rebellion against God (See Dt 13:13-15; compare Nm 25:1-9; Dt 4:3). The concern of the other tribes was that if the altar were built for idol worship as the golden calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai, then all the tribes would suffer the judgment of God. Their concern, therefore, was for their own well-being, not that Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had gone after idol gods.

22:21-29 When Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh saw that their neighbors to the west were greatly offended with the building of the altar, they were grieved. In their grief they clearly explained that their purpose for building the altar on the western side of the Jordan was the exact opposite of what the western tribes had presumed. The altar was to remind them of their unity with all Israel. It was not built to manifest any separation from the other tribes or in honor of any of the false gods.

22:30-34 ***It pleased them:*** When the leaders of the western tribes heard the explanation for the building of the altar, it pleased them that Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh wanted their children to remember that they were a part of all Israel. The discussions of the meeting, therefore, prevailed in bringing a correct understanding concerning why the altar was built, and thus unity of spirit was preserved. ***A witness:*** Some translations read, "Ed," which means, "a witness." The altar was a witness to the fact that Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were a part of all the tribes of Israel.

Chapter 23
JOSHUA'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

23:1-13 ***Joshua called for all Israel:*** This meeting took place near the end of Joshua's life. It probably occurred at the place of his inheritance (See 19:50). He knew he was close to death, and thus wanted to again exhort the people to take heed to the dangers of apostasy from the law of God (Compare Moses' similar exhortation in Dt 12 - 26). He knew the stiff-necked nature of the Israelites. He knew that they were often rebellious and had a mind of their own. Therefore, he first reminded them how God had fought for them (See 4:21-24; 10:14,42), and how God had fulfilled His promise in giving them the land. Their victories over the Canaanites could not be claimed to have originated from their own power. They had to attribute their victories to God. ***Keep and do all that is written:*** Moses had written the book of the law of the covenant (See 1:7). If they were obedient to the law they would prosper (See 1:8). Because the law had been written, they had no excuse in forgetting what was written. They would have no justifiable complaint when suffering the curses of God that came as a result of neglecting His word (See comments Hs 4:6). ***Not associate with:*** They were to keep themselves from the culture of the Canaanites who remained in the land. Their responsibility was to drive them out, which responsibility they failed to assume. ***Not ... make mention of the name of their gods:*** That is, they were not in any way to worship the idol gods of the Canaanites (See Ex 23:13; Dt 10:20). Such would be spiritual adultery and rebellion against God. Since one cannot give allegiance to a god that is created after the imagination of man and the God of heaven without committing spiritual adultery, then he must choose which master he would serve (See comments Js 4:4; compare Mt 6:24). The pagan idol gods of the Canaanites were the product of their own imagination. They were gods that they had created after themselves in order to appease worship that was immoral. Idolatry is the worship of one's own desire to do as he pleases. Joshua knew that what he asked them not to do, they would eventually do. In the comfort of their prosperity they would seek to do that which was right in their own eyes, and thus leave the law of God. ***Chase a thousand:*** The reward for loyalty to the law of God would be their victory over the remainder of the Canaanites in the land. God would fight for them (See Dt 28:7; 32:30; Lv 26:7,8). This principle answers the question as to why they did not and could not drive out the remainder of the Canaanites from the land. They forsook the law of God, and subsequently, God did not fight for them. Instead, as the book of Judges reveals, God fought against them in order to bring them to repentance. ***Intermarry with them:*** This would be the downfall of Israel. They would not maintain their separation from those who believed in idols. Their marriage with idolatrous people would eventually result in their being taken into captivity. Because Israel did not drive out the remnant of the Canaanites in the land, the Canaanites affected them instead of Israel teaching them concerning the one true and living God (See Nm 33:55).

23:14-16 ***Not one thing has failed:*** In this summation of his exhortation, Joshua reminded the people that they had no grounds for complaint against God. The original promise to Abraham in reference to physical blessings had been fulfilled (See Gn 12:1-3). They were a great nation. They were in their own land. The name of Abraham had become great. The only promise yet to be fulfilled at this time was the Blessing that would bless all men. This was the Savior of the world. ***The anger of the Lord:*** Except for the coming of the Messiah, the retention of the promises to Abraham were conditional. They were conditioned on the obedience of Israel. If Israel failed to keep the law of the covenant, they would lose the land and be reduced to a remnant nation that would return to the land after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

Chapter 24

24:1-13 ***Gathered all the tribes:*** The city of Shechem in the central part of the land was the location for this gathering. Joshua reviewed the history of Israel from the time of Abraham to the day of his life as their leader in the conquest of the land. The purpose of this summary of historical events was to emphasize the work of God through them as a nation. As he reviewed the miracle of God to build and bring this nation to where it was in the land, they were to be reassured that God would work with them in the future. However, in order for God to work with them, they had to remain faithful to His will. It is significant to notice God's grace toward Israel to accomplish the fulfillment of His promises to Israel. They were a rebellious and stiffnecked people. However, they were a nation that could repent, and thus reap the grace of God. ***Other side of the River:*** This would be a reference to the Euphrates and to the original home of the family of Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees (See vss 14,15). The call of Abraham, therefore, took place when he was still in Ur of the Chaldees. ***God ... took ... led ... multiplied ... gave ... sent ... brought:*** All the verbs of this exhortation place emphasis on God doing the work. Lest the Israelites be puffed up in their own strength and ingenuity, they had to be reminded that it was God, not them, who brought the nation to this point in their history (Zc

4:6). ***I sent the hornet before you:*** This could be a reference to the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III. In 1479 B.C. he had ravaged Palestine for approximately sixty years. In these wars of Egypt against Palestine, God would thus have weakened the kings of the Canaanites in preparation for the coming of Israel around 1400 B.C. (See Dt 7:20). ***Cities that you did not build:*** Israel was given a ready-made country in which to dwell. They did not have to prepare the land for planting. They did not have to build the cities. Their hearts, therefore, should be filled with gratitude for the work of God in bringing them to this time in history. When one sees all that he has, he should be grateful to God. There should be no room for complaint.

24:14-28 ***Choose you this day whom you will serve:*** God did not work against their free will to bring them to this point in history. Neither would He make their choices for the future. As a nation, they had their own destiny in their hands. Their right to choose made them responsible. Because of what God had done for them in the past, it was reasonable for them to make the choice to continue in obedience to His will in the future. However, if they failed to do the will of God, they would be responsible for their own judgments from God. ***Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord:*** But this is exactly what they did in the generations to come. The book of Judges is a history of their repeated rejections of the Lord and the Lord's punishment of them for their apostasy. Though this generation to whom Joshua was speaking recognized the wonders of God who brought them to this point in their history, their failure to teach their children resulted in the future apostasy of the generations to come. ***If you forsake the Lord:*** It was not possible to serve the Lord, and at the same time give allegiance to their own will which manifested itself in the form of idolatry. Since idolatry is man making his own religion after his own desires, then the idolater cannot be totally committed to God. One cannot serve himself, and at the same time, be completely committed to following the law of God. ***Put away the foreign gods:*** In other words, they were to put away their self-willed spirit that they had adopted from the self-determined Canaanites whom they allowed to dwell among them. The Canaanites survived because of their self-determination that expressed itself in their religious beliefs. But Israel survived because of her trust in the one true God. What affected Israel in her history after this time was that she allowed the self-determination of the Canaanite culture to have fertile soil in her stiffnecked attitude. Israel's hardheaded personality blended well with the self-determination of the Canaanite culture. The blend led to Israel's rejection of the will of God in order that every man do that which was right in his own eyes. ***He will not forgive your transgressions:*** God will not forgive any sin of which there is no repentance. In this case, He would not forgive disloyalty to His law. If they chose to serve themselves by creating gods and religions after their own lusts, then there would be no forgiveness (See comments Hs 4:6; Mt 6:24; Js 1:8). ***We will serve ...:*** The book of Joshua was written, not only to give the following generations of Israel a history of God working through them to conquer the land, but also to provide a written record of the oath that the people made at this time. They swore their allegiance to God. When in the future they were punished for their rebellion, the sinning generations could read the words of commitment that their forefathers made to remain faithful to God's covenant. ***A great stone:*** In order that their commitment to serve God be remembered, it was written on a stone monument.

24:28-33 ***Israel severed the Lord:*** This service continued throughout the life of Joshua and the elders who outlived Joshua. Throughout the recorded history of Israel that we have in the Old Testament, this seems to be the only period of time in their history that they totally gave themselves to the Lord. After this brief period of loyalty to the Lord, they cursed themselves with their own stiffnecked and self-willed attitudes to do their own thing by calling for a king to rule over them and their adoption of the religions around them. The problem in the generations to come was that they had forgotten the lesson that was learned at Jericho and Ai. At Jericho they obeyed the Lord in every detail. As a result, they were completely victorious over the inhabitants of Jericho. However, at Ai sin came into the camp of Israel. Because of the sin, God allowed them to be defeated by the inhabitants of Ai until they repented. Israel's history after the death of Joshua and the elders of his generation, was that they allowed sin to remain in the camp of Israel. As a result, God did not fight for them as He did at Jericho. They were thus unable to drive out the remainder of the Canaanites from Palestine. They were thus influence by the religion of the Canaanites, which religion turned their focus from God to creating gods after their own imagination. ***The bones of Joseph:*** See Gn 50:25; Ex 13:19; Hb 11:22. This place of burial had been bought by Jacob (Gn 33:19). ***Eleazar:*** See Nm 3:32; 20:28.

Judges

WRITER

Jewish tradition attributes the authorship of the book to Samuel who was a prophet and judge of Israel. However, it is uncertain as to who wrote the book. In reference to the nature of the writing of the book, we can assume that the Holy Spirit used one or several different writers. It is not necessary that we know the writer of any specific inspired book in order to accept the book as inspired. If the Jews accepted the book as inspired when written, and subsequently added the book to the canon of Jewish Old Testament Scriptures, then we also accept the book as a part of the Old Testament. The validation of any Old Testament book as inspired must first be made by the acceptance of the Jews, and thus added to their cannon of Scripture.

DATE

The authorship of the book depends a great deal on when the book was written. Isaiah 9:4 seems to elude to Judges 7:21-25. If this is true then the book would have been written before the time of Isaiah who ministered during the 7th century B.C. In 992 B.C. the Canaanites were still living in Gezer (1:29) when Pharaoh conquered the city. However, Pharaoh drove them out and later presented the city to one of Solomon's wives around 970 B.C. (1 Kg 9:16). Thus the book would be dated sometime before 992 B.C. when the Canaanites were still living in Gezer. Also, the Jebusites were still living in Jerusalem (1:21), and thus the book would have been written before the time of David who drove them out of the city around 1048 B.C. (2 Sm 5:6-9). It would have been written before the time of Saul, the first king of Israel, for several times it is mentioned that there was no king in Israel (See 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). There is no conclusive argument that establishes the date of the book. It could have been written any time after the events of the book to the time of the reign of King Saul. Regardless of the time of writing, the Jews accepted this book as Scripture.

BOOK

The book of Joshua covers about 350 years of Jewish history from the time of the death of Joshua to the judgeship of Samuel. The book derives its name from the Septuagint, Peshitta and Latin Vulgate. The early Jewish copies of the book entitled it, *sepher shophetiym*, meaning "a book of judges," or "a book of governors." *Shophetiym* is a Hebrew word that means "to judge," "to govern," or "to rule." The judges were either warriors, chieftains as Gideon and Samson who delivered Israel from their enemies, priests as Eli who directed Israel's heart back to God, or prophets as Samuel. They worked as God's appointed men to accomplish His work among the Israelites. However, there was no succession of judges who descended from them in their families. They did not have authority to change the law of God in any way, but worked to lead Israel back to the law. They did not add prophetic messages to the canon of Old Testament Scriptures. They were exceptional people that God raised up in a time of national calamity in order to save Israel from her enemies. We know the names of 16 judges, but not all their names.

The book of Judges is a record of the unfaithfulness of Israel and God's efforts to call her to repentance. It is a book that explains the mercy and grace of God in reference to the sin of His people. One of the major lessons of the book is that after the death of Joshua, and for approximately the next 350 years, Israel continually went into apostasy and was called back to faithfulness. The Israelites' apostasy from their covenant with God was persistent. Their disobedience led them to national disasters, economic oppression and raids by foreign powers. Nevertheless, God was faithful in delivering them from the economic oppression of their enemies. Because of the Canaanites, which Israel failed to drive out of the land, the Israelites were continually influenced to forsake the conditions of the covenant that they had with God. There is thus a repeated cycle of history recorded in this book. The people went into sin, God sent Israel's enemies to subdue and oppress her, the people repented, and as a result of her repentance God delivered her from her enemies.

We must study Israel's history to our own situation today. We as Christians live in a world of various religious beliefs. It is imperative, therefore, that Christians remain faithful to the word of God in order that they not be deceived by the religions around them.

SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Understanding the social structure of Israel and her economics during the initial years of her possession of the land helps us to interpret the book of Judges. When the Israelites settled in the land, they became an agricultural nation with families living independently on farms throughout the territory of Palestine. Each tribe settled in a particular allotted territory where they farmed the land and grew into a clan of families.

There were 46 cities given to the Levites, and thus at least these cities were places to which the people were to go for instruction in the law of God. The people took their offerings to these cities for the Levites, and thus these cities were not centers of trade, but centers for offerings. Neither were these cities business centers as we would conceive them to be after the modern-day cities in which we live today. The cities of the Levites were actually small towns or villages that could be fed by the produce of nearby farms, and those who brought their offerings to the Levites.

Those Israelites who lived in the rural area of Palestine had to live independently, and thus they sought to sell their produce to any nearby people. The Israelites, therefore, lived in the country, farming the land, and making periodic visits to the cities of the Levites. The tribes settled throughout their allotted territories. The families developed into clans as sons and daughters stayed in close proximity to one another and the patriarch family of the clan. In this way the Israelites grew to populate the land that was initially given to the families after the conclusion of the national wars of Israel.

As each tribe developed within their allotted territories, they became somewhat autonomous from one another as independent farmers, and to some extent anonymous from one another. This spirit of autonomy eventually

led to a sense of nationhood within each particular tribal group. Since each tribe failed in their responsibility to drive out the remaining Canaanites within their allotted territory after the conclusion of the national wars that were led by Joshua, their autonomy became an opportunity that led to oppression and raids. Because of their spirit of autonomy, the Israelites began to associate and trade with the remaining Canaanites in their particular territories. With the trade came social contact and intermarriage. The Canaanites eventually took advantage of this by economically subjecting the Israelite farmers to supply their needs by demanding tribute. Those farmers who did not subject themselves were raided by nearby foreign powers as the Midianites. In their autonomy, and often anonymous relationship with one another, the Israelites were easy victims to the oppression of the Canaanites and raids by neighboring foreigners.

The tribes' socioeconomic relationship with the Canaanites led to the Israelites acceptance of the religious beliefs of those with whom they traded and intermarried. The Israelites did not reject their belief in the one true God, they only added to their religious beliefs the beliefs of the gods of the Canaanites. Their compromise of the truth of God, thus led them to compromise their values, and subsequently their behavior. In this spiritual adultery they were led away from the will of God. And since Christians today live in the same situation, it is important the Christians be diligent in their study of the word of God (2 Tm 2:15). If they do not grow in the knowledge of Jesus, they will turn away from His word. (2 Pt 3:18).

PERIODS OF THE JUDGES

REFERENCE	OPPRESSOR	YEARS	JUDGE	PEACE
3:7-11	Cushan Rishathaim	8	Othniel	40 years
3:12-31	Moabites & Philistines	18	Ehud/Shamgar	80 years
4:1 – 5:31	Northern Canaanites	20	Deborah/Barak	40 years
6:8-32	Midianites	7	Gideon	40 years
9:1 – 10:6	Civil wars		Abimelech/Tola/Jair	48 years
10:6 – 12:15	Ammonites	18	Jephthah/Ibzan Elon/Abdon	32 years
13:1-16	Philistines	40	Samson/Eli/Samuel	20 years

Faithful Years
(1:1 – 3:6)

Outline: (1) Living under God's direction (1:1-36), (2) Rebuke for compromise (2:1-6), (3) Loyalty of the people (2:7-10), (4) Apostasy and punishment (2:11-23), (5) Testing by their enemies (3:1-6).

Chapter 1
LIVING UNDER GOD'S DIRECTION

1:1-7 ***Judah will go up:*** The command to defend the land was now in the hands of individual tribes, not a central command as through Joshua. A shift from national responsibility to tribal responsibility for driving out the Canaanites now took place in the history of Israel. ***Simeon:*** Because they did not have confidence in themselves to defeat the Canaanites, Judah asked for the help of the tribe of Simeon. ***Perizzites:*** The mention of the Canaanites in this context indicates that these nomadic people continued to dwell at least in the central region of Palestine. ***Adonibezek:*** This was possibly the title of a position and not the name of a specific individual, though the context seems to indicate that this was the name of a person. ***Cut off his thumbs and his great toes:*** The symbolism here was to incapacitate an individual in reference to his ability to carry a sword or run in battle. The physical amputations symbolized the amputation of the power of the leadership of a nation. Adonibezek realized that he must reap what he had sown in reference to his conquest of others (See comments Gl 6:7). He had been brutal to others, and thus he here reaped his own brutality.

1:8-15 ***Had fought against Jerusalem:*** This is added information concerning the defeat of Jerusalem that took place under the leadership of Joshua (See Ja 10). ***The Negev:*** Or, the Negeb, or South. This was the southern area of Palestine that was mostly desert. ***Hebron:*** Formerly called, Kirjath Arba, Hebron was a city in the hill country about 19 miles (25 kilometers) southwest of Jerusalem (See Nm 13:22; Ja 15:14). ***Othniel:*** This was Caleb's nephew, if we assume that Kenaz was Caleb's younger brother. ***Achsah:*** Joshua gave her beyond what she asked (See Ja 15:15-19).

1:16-21 ***Father-in-law:*** This term could also be translated "brother-in-law" (See 4:11). The father-in-law of Moses was Jethro (Ex 3:1; 4:18) or Reuel (Ex 2:18). Hobab was the son of Reuel (Nm 10:29), which would make him the brother-in-law of Moses. ***Kenite:*** The Kenites were in Palestine as early as the days of Abraham (Gn 15:19). ***Hobab:*** Because he was familiar with the wilderness in which Israel was condemned to

wander, Hobab was invited as a guide for Israel. When Israel settled in the land of promise, the family of Hobab settled in a city at the south end of the Dead Sea (4:11). ***Zephath:*** During the battle against this city some of the Israelite soldiers were captured (See Nm 21:1-3). Because of this their fellow soldiers made a commitment that they would completely destroy the city (Ja 6:18). Later the city was renamed Hormah. ***Gaza ... Askelon ... Ekron:*** These were three major cities of the Philistines that were southwest of Jerusalem in the coastal regions of Palestine. Later in the history of Israel, they gained their independence and were a thorn in the flesh of Israel (See 1 Sm 4:2). ***The Jebusites:*** See Ja 3:10; 18:28. The Jebusites, meaning, "to trample upon," were still in Jerusalem at the time of David's reign (2 Sm 4:6,7; 1 Ch 11:4-8). Since they occupied Jerusalem at the time of this writing, this would indicate that the book of Joshua was written before the reign of King David, for David drove out the Jebusites from the city of Jerusalem.

1:22-26 ***Bethel:*** The Canaanites called this city Luz (Gn 28:19). There was also a second city call Bethel which was located in the territory of Simeon (1 Sm 30:27). Land of the ***Hittites:*** This land possibly extended into southern Asia Minor. Between 1900 to around 1200 B.C., the Hittites were a great empire of people in southern Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). The territory of their kingdom extended south into the northern regions of Palestine.

1:27-36 ***Manasseh did not drive out:*** See Ja 17:11-13. What Manasseh failed to do here later became a curse to them and Israel. As the other tribes, after the national wars under the command of Joshua, they were to assume their tribal responsibility of cleansing the land of the Canaanites once the land was allotted to the individual tribes. They, as the other tribes, failed to do this. Subsequently, the Canaanite culture of wicked idolatry infiltrated Israel. ***Beth Shean:*** This city was established around 3,000 B.C. and was known as Decapolis in the days of Jesus (Mt 4:25; see 1 Sm 31:10). Today it is called Beisan. ***Taanach:*** See Ja 17:11; 21:25. ***Megiddo:*** Or, Megiddon (Zc 12:11) was an ancient city that was established around 3500 B.C. ***Gezer:*** See 2 Sm 5:25; 1 Ch 14:16. This ancient city was in existence by 3000 B.C. ***Became forced labor ... tributaries:*** The inhabitants of those cities that Israel did not conquer either became bondservants to Israel at this time or they were subjected to paying tribute to Israel. This plan may have appeared good to Israel at the time, but it later became a moral disaster to each tribal group. The idolatrous culture of the inhabitants of these cities later changed the culture of Israel, turned their minds away from God, and finally resulted in Israel's eradication centuries later from the promised land through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. The reason the religious beliefs of the Canaanites were accepted by the Israelites was because the Canaanite beliefs appealed to the carnal nature of man. They were beliefs that were formed after the desire of those who humanistically looked to themselves as the authority of belief and behavior. As the Canaanites did that which was right in their own eyes, so the Israelites eventually assumed the same world view.

Chapter 2

REBUKE FOR COMPROMISE

2:1-6 ***An angel of the Lord:*** See Ex 23:20; Ja 5:13-15 (Compare Ex 34:10-27). This was a messenger of God who reminded Israel of their failure to obey the command of God in reference to making any covenants with the inhabitants of the land. Since reference here is to "an angel" we would not assume that this was the preincarnate Christ, but one of His messengers to the people of Israel. The angel was simply delivering to Israel the message of the Lord. ***You have not obeyed My voice:*** The Israelites had formerly promised that they would not break their covenant with the Lord. But they went back on their promise by making alliances with those they were to eradicate from the land (See Ex 34:10-27). ***Bochim:*** This word means, "weepers." They wept when they were reminded that they had not kept the conditions of the covenant. They were repentant, but they still failed to eradicate the land of the Canaanite culture. Their repentance, therefore, was not combined with works.

LOYALTY OF THE PEOPLE

2:7-10 The statements here end the review of what took place during the days of Joshua. The nation was loyal to God through the leadership of Joshua. However, this all changed in the decades after the death of Joshua. ***Another generation ... that did not know the Lord:*** This new generation was an indication of the failure of the fathers to communicate the wonders, works and will of God to their children. It seems that they not only failed to teach their children the work of the Lord in settling Israel in the land, they also failed to teach them the law of the Lord. This failure would be repeated throughout the history of Israel. Successive generations would fail to remember the Lord, and thus the Lord would discipline them through the oppression and raids of their enemies. The people would repent, have peace for a brief period of time, but then again forget the Lord. This was the history of Israel as it is recorded in the book of Joshua.

APOSTASY & PUNISHMENT

2:11-15 ***Served the Baals:*** The word "baal" means "lord," "possessor," "owner," or "husband." The plural form, "baalim," refers to the "great lords" or "sovereign owners." These gods that were created after the imagination of men appealed to the humanistic lusts of the flesh. In most cases, religious behavior that was connected to Baal worship was focused on the fertility of man, land and animals. Certain occult practices were adhered to because it was believed that such practices were necessary for the productivity of the land, animals and men. Baal was the imagined god of the Chaldeans, Phoenicians and Moabites (Nm 22:41). The Philistines, where Baal was referred to as Baalzebub, or "lord of flies" (2 Kg 1:2), also practiced some of the rites of the Baal gods. Human sacrifice was associated with Baal worship and various lascivious ceremonies (1 Kg 14:24; Hs 13:2). Parents even sacrificed their children to Baal in some instances (Jr 19:5). ***Ashtaroth:*** Astarte was the ancient Semitic goddess of love, fertility and marriage. This was also an ancient religion that was invented

by man to please the lusts of the flesh. It was practiced in the days of Abraham (Gn 14:5) and was a religion of the Sidonians and Phoenicians (1 Kg 11:33). It was also practiced among the Arabs and Philistines (1 Sm 31:10). Among the Babylonians and Assyrians, Astarte, or Ishtar, was also a goddess of war. The practice of fornication was a part of this religion (See 1 Kg 11:5). Astarte was also known as the "queen of heaven" (Jr 7:18). The Greeks referred to her as Aphrodite and the Romans called her Venus. Both the Baal gods and the Ashtaroth were the creation of men who sought to follow after the lust of the eyes, lusts of the flesh and pride of life. These gods were the creation of men who refused to seek out the law of God, but rather sought to please their own carnal imaginations and lusts. Following after such gods was rebellion against God. When the Israelites went after their own imaginations in serving their own religious creations, God became their adversary (1 Sm 28:16). Through the proxy of Israel's enemies, He disciplined them by removing His protective hand over the nation (Jb 1:10; Zc 2:5).

2:16-23 ***The Lord raised up judges:*** This is the repetitive action of God in response to the cries of Israel to be delivered from her enemies that God released upon her because of her sin. This is the theme of the book of Judges. The judges were leaders, governors or chieftains who were commissioned by God to deliver Israel from her oppressors. In every case when Israel forsook God, there was a repetitive cycle of restoration. The cycle involved Israel's sin, bondage to foreign powers, repentance, prayer for deliverance, God's raising up of a judge, God's deliverance, and then the death of the judge. ***Prostituted themselves after other gods:*** They were unfaithful to the Lord, and thus gave themselves to gods that they had created after their own imagination (See Hs 2:5,13). ***The Lord left those nations:*** This statement reveals the inadequacy of Israel as a military power to do anything without the power of God behind them. They could never as a nation have driven out of Palestine those nations they did without the power of God working through them. As tribal groups who gave up on God, they were completely inadequate to drive out those Canaanites who dwelt in their homelands. When God left them, they were not able to drive out the nations. God thus took the credit for leaving nations in the land and among the Israelites because the Israelites by their own military strength could not totally eradicate the Canaanites from the land. Christians would do well to remember this principle (See Rm 8:31,37; Ph 4:13). Without the power of God in our lives, we can do nothing.

Chapter 3

TESTING BY THEIR ENEMIES

3:1-6 ***The Lord left to test Israel:*** God turns that which is wrong into good for His people. By forsaking the will of God, He did not work for the tribal groups in their efforts to cast out of their allotted inheritances the remnants of the Canaanites. When they forsook God, God forsook them and allowed them to be overcome by their enemies. However, God used the occasion of Israel's negligence to develop the armies of the individual tribes in order to strengthen them against future attacks by the Canaanites. The Canaanite peoples who are mentioned in this context remained in the land of Palestine throughout Israel's years in Palestine. Since many Israelites intermarried with the Canaanites, Hittities, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, it would be difficult to say that any Jew was pure Jew in his or her lineage back to the sons of Jacob. By the time of Jesus, no mention is made of the Canaanite people, and thus we would assume that they had been integrated into Israel by the time Jesus was born into the world. ***Mt. Lebanon:*** This is the snow-covered mountain range of northern Palestine. The highest peak is about 10,200 feet. ***Mt. Hermon:*** This was the northern most area of conquest during the time of Moses and Joshua. This mountain is about 9,000 feet above sea level and is covered with snow. It is the source of the Jordan River and was possibly the mountain of the transfiguration of Jesus (See Mt 17:1-13).

History Of Unfaithfulness & Repentance (3:7 – 16:31)

Outline: (1) Othniel delivers Israel (3:7-11), (2) Ehud delivers Israel (3:12-30), (3) Shamgar defeats the Philistines (3:31), (4) Deborah and Barak deliver Israel (4:1 – 5:31), (5) Gideon delivers Israel (6:1 – 8:35), (6) The tyranny of Abimelech (9:1-57), (7) Tola and Jair (10:1-5), (8) Jephthah delivers Israel (10:6 – 12:7), (9) Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (12:8-15), (10) Samson and the Philistines (13:1 – 16:31)

OTHNIEL DELIVERS ISRAEL

3:7-11 ***The children of Israel did evil:*** This phrase introduces each occasion when God was sought to rescue Israel from her oppressors. The cycles of sin and restoration started with Israel forgetting the Lord and serving the Baals at the Asherahs (groves) (See 2:11). ***Astheroths:*** See Ex 34:13; Dt 16:21; 1 Kg 16:33; 2 Kg 13:6; 17:16; 18:4; 21:3; 23:6,15. Once they sinned, the anger of the Lord was kindled against His people. By the Lord's discipline through a foreign oppressor, the apostasy was stopped when Israel repented. After their repentance, the Lord delivered them. ***Cushan-Rishathaim:*** The Hebrew word here means "an Ethiopian of great wickedness." ***Mesopotamia:*** This is a Greek word that was given to the region between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (See At 2:9). Since the Cushite king was king over Mesopotamia, we would assume that this invasion of the land of Palestine came from the east. ***Othniel:*** Since Othniel was Caleb's younger brother, this apostasy took place soon after the death of the patriarchs who initially took portions of the land of Palestine from the Canaanites. *The Spirit of the Lord:* The judges whom God rose up could do nothing without the help of the Holy Spirit of God. Though the judges were often charismatic leaders, their leadership was enhanced by the Spirit, and thus people saw in them the help of God. ***Rest forty years:*** This generational period of time was the result of the influence that a strong leader had on the people. It seems that Israel had a difficult time instilling in her children the knowledge of and obedience to the will of God. They remained faithful throughout the life of those who experienced the direct work of God to deliver them from their enemies. However, when the generation that experienced the deliverance of God died, the children digressed into sin.

EHUD DELIVERS ISRAEL

3:12-30 ***Eglon:*** The Moabites resided east of the Jordan in the region between the Dead Sea and the Arnon River. By forming a coalition with the Ammonites and the Amalekites, Eglon was used as God's proxy judgment against Israel. The Ammonites, meaning "born of a kindred (incest)," originated from Ben-ammi (Gn 19:38). Ben-ammi was the son of Lot whose mother was Lot's younger daughter. The Amalekites originated from Amalek, the son of Esau (Gn 36:12), who was the father of an Arab people (See Ex 17:8; Dt 25:17). ***Ehud:*** As most of the Benjamites, Ehud was left-handed. ***Present to Eglon:*** This was probably the regular tribute that was being paid to Eglon by Israel. ***Gilgal:*** This term refers to sculptured images, or idols. ***Message from God:*** Because Ehud was left-handed, he caught Eglon off guard, and thus the lethal blow was struck with a knife that was approximately 18 inches long. Ehud struck the king so hard with the knife that the hilt of the knife was also thrust into the abdomen of Eglon. This death of the Moabite King rallied enthusiasm on the part of Israel. Through Ehud's leadership, God once again delivered Israel out of the hand of oppressors from the east. As a result, Israel had peace from oppressors for 80 years.

SHAMGAR DEFEATS THE PHILISTINES

3:31 Only one verse of scripture is dedicated to the work of Shamgar. With a long pole that is sharpened at one end, and is used to direct oxen, he slew 600 Philistines. From the brevity of this account of the third judge doing such great harm to the Philistines, we would assume that God wanted Israel to remember that it required only one person with His help to inflict great harm on Israel's enemies. There would have been no possible way for Shamgar to do what he did on his own. We must conclude that only through the physical empowerment of God he was able to kill 600 men with one sharpened pole. This physical empowerment was magnified in the life of Samson.

Chapter 4

DEBORAH AND BARAK DELIVER ISRAEL

4:1-3 ***Jabin:*** This was a Canaanite king who reigned in Hazor which was located in the territory of Naphtali (See Ja 11:13; 1 Kg 9:15). ***Mightily oppressed:*** The oppression was the Canaanite king's subjection of the Israelite farmers to supply his people with food. The oppression was probably greater than the oppressions that were brought on Israel by other nations. It may be that Jabin was overconfident in his 900 chariots of iron, and thus extracted extreme servitude from the Israelite farmers. Whatever the case, this oppression was extreme, and for this reason, a great deal of history is here dedicated to the victory of Israel to throw off this oppression.

4:4-10 ***Deborah:*** As a prophetess, Deborah had been judging Israel at the beginning of Jabin's oppression. Unfortunately, Israel was not listening to this woman prophet, and thus did not keep themselves close to God. ***Ramah:*** There were other cities named Ramah in Israel (See Ja 19:8,29,36; 1 Sm 1:19; 2 Kg 8:28,29). ***If you will go with me:*** For some reason, Barak was cautious about the plan of Deborah, for he wanted her presence by his side when the plan of attack was carried out. Because he wanted the presence of Deborah, Barak would receive no glory from this victory, for Jabin would be delivered into the hand of a woman.

4:11-16 ***The Lord has delivered Sisera:*** Credit was always given to the Lord for Israel's victories. This case was no different. Sisera was informed of the challenge of the assembled army of Israel, and thus marshalled his army to put down the rebellion. ***The Lord routed Sisera:*** The Hebrew word for "routed" means to "confuse," or "scatter." The direct hand of the Lord was involved in this battle, for a flash flood of the Kishon River turned the plains into mud through which the 900 chariots of Sisera could not pass. There was thus great confusion in the army of Sisera. With his entire army, Sisera fled on foot in fear of the Israelites.

4:17-24 ***The tent of Jael:*** This nomadic family lived in peace with both the Canaanites and the Israelites. Jael had surely heard of the defeat of Sisera's army, and thus under the guise of being hospitable, invited Sisera into her tent in order to pretend to protect him. Unaware of being deceived, Sisera fell into a deep sleep. While asleep, Jael drove a tent peg through Sisera's head. The Kenites thus maintained their peaceful relationship with the Israelites by the act of a woman who killed one of the leaders of the enemies of God. It sometimes takes bold women to stand up for that which is right. ***Until they had destroyed Jabin:*** The defeat of Sisera was the beginning of the end of Jabin and his oppression of Israel. From the time of this victory, the Israelite army grew stronger and bolder until they destroyed Jabin and his kingdom.

Chapter 5

5:1-5 This chapter is a poetic song of the victory of Israel over the army of Sisera. The composition of the narrative is one of the oldest pieces of Hebrew poetry. ***Willingly offered themselves:*** God gives victory to those who totally commit themselves to Him. When the leaders accept their responsibility to lead God's people and the people sacrifice themselves, great things happen to the glory of God.

5:6-11 ***The days of Shamgar ... Jael:*** Because of thieves, the main roads were not used in those days. Because it was unsafe to live in the villages, the people lived in walled cities. Not even a spear or shield could be found among 40,000 soldiers. Anarchy prevailed until Deborah, the mother of Israel. ***Mother in Israel:*** Deborah's motherly concern for Israel was the salvation of Israel. Not only did she have responsibilities in the home (4:4), but as a prophetess, she spoke to the people for the Lord. She inspired others to walk by faith (4:8,9), and in this chapter, and on behalf of the people, she gave praise to God. The lives of godly women have great impact on the people of God. ***Governors ... offered themselves willingly:*** When leaders offer themselves for the people, the people are inspired to follow. Good leadership is defined by those who lead for the sake of the people and not for themselves. In this case, it was the leadership of a godly woman who led by the righteous example of her commitment to the Lord.

5:12-18 Deborah and Barak were called to inspire faith and confidence in the people to stand against Sisera. Jabin

sent Sisera to oppress the regions of Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir, Zebulun and Issachar. On the other hand, Reuben, Dan and Asher were indifferent to the appeal to fight against Jabin and Sisera. While the concerned risked their lives for their own existence and freedom, others sat idly by without concern. At this point in the history of Israel, the brotherhood of the nation had to a great extent been lost. The Israelites' independent spirit had taken them to a point of little concern for one another's tribal conflicts.

5:19-23 ***No gain of money:*** This was a war for freedom. The soldiers did not fight for the spoils of the enemy, but for their freedom from the oppression of the Anakim. ***Kishon swept them away:*** This was the direct hand of God against the enemies of Israel (Compare Jr 51:33). The chariots of the enemy were bogged down in the mud of the swollen river. ***Horsehoofs broken:*** The riders in the chariots probably deserted their chariots in the flood, and the horses subsequently went wild in the torrents of the water. It was a scene of mass confusion among animals and men. ***Curse you Meroz:*** It is a sin to fail to come to the rescue of those you can help.

5:24-27 ***Jael:*** See 4:17-22. Honor for the final victory over Sisera went to a woman in fulfillment of the prophecy that glory would go to a woman and not Barak (4:9).

5:28-31 ***Mother ... cried:*** The wickedness of every son or daughter brings grief to some mother. ***Rest forty years:*** Another generation of Israel rested from oppression because Deborah and Barak assumed their responsibility to lead the oppressed tribes of Israel to freedom. However, once this generation died, their sons and daughters returned again to forgetting the Lord and forming trade alliances and religious connections with unbelievers.

Chapter 6
GIDEON DELIVERS ISRAEL

6:1-6 ***Midianites:*** The Midianites were a nomadic people who dwelt in the Arabian Desert region southeast of the Dead Sea. They descended from Abraham through his wife Keturah (Gn 25:2-4; compare Ex 3:1; Nm 22:4-7; 31:8,10,11,17). The Midianite oppression of Israel here was an act of vengeance. On Israel's march to Canaan under the leadership of Moses, Israel had killed five Midianite kings (Nm 31:8). Their oppression of Israel at the time was so severe that the Israelites fled to the mountains and lived in caves. ***They came as locusts in number:*** The fact that the Midianites and Amalekites were able to invade the territory of Israel on such a large scale is evidence of the fact that the tribes of Israel at this time in history had little allegiance to one another. After the death of Joshua, they went to their own territories, and subsequently disengaged from one another because of their independent spirit. They had no central leadership to muster an army against invading foreign powers. And because they had forsaken God as their "central government," they were vulnerable to the invasion of any foreign power. When later in history they did become weary of the invasion of foreign powers, they turned to a king on earth while forsaking the King in heaven. Their choice of Saul to be their king many years later, therefore, was evidence that they continued to trust in themselves and not in God. Their trust was not in men as Moses and Joshua, who throughout their lives, focused the people directly on God as their King.

6:7-10 ***The Lord sent a prophet:*** The name of this prophet is not given. His name was not important, but his message was. His message was to remind Israel of how God worked with and protected them when the nation lived under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. Moses and Joshua had given Israel an example of trusting only in the Lord. Unfortunately, the Israelites digressed to trusting in themselves, that is, going after other gods that they formed in their minds to cater to their own desires. The prophet's message was a pronouncement of this sin in Israel.

6:11-18 ***Hide it from the Midianites:*** The fact that Gideon had to hide what wheat he thrashed indicates the severity of the oppression the raiding Midianites maintained over Israel. The Israelites had lost their freedom to carry out the ordinary functions of life. They were an unorganized people with no resistance to foreigners who without opposition raided them continually for the produce of their farms. ***The angel of the Lord:*** In this context the article "the" is used with the word angel, thus indicating that the "angel" was the preincarnate Son of God. In verse 14 the angel speaks as the Lord. ***You mighty valiant man:*** God knew the character of Gideon before Gideon himself realized his leadership ability. There are hidden gifts in every person, though the gifts often go unrecognized and under utilized by each of us. ***My family is poor:*** Too often people have used their poverty as an excuse not to serve the Lord with all that the Lord has given them. Gideon used his poverty as an excuse. He claimed to be poor, but poor in comparison to whom? There were evidently still some in Israel who were not as economically poor as he was. But in this case, God would not allow him to use his poverty as an excuse. ***I am least:*** As both Moses and Jeremiah, the lack of confidence of Gideon moved him to excuse himself from duty (See Ex 3:11; Jr 1:6). But again, God would not allow him to use his lack of confidence as an excuse. ***Show me a sign:*** Only those who lack faith need a sign before they act for God (See comments Jn 20:26-29). In this case, Gideon lacked faith (Compare Mt 12:39). God provided the sign for Gideon to take action, but from there on, he had to use his ingenuity to carry out the attack against the Midianites.

6:19-24 ***You will not die:*** After Gideon realized that the messenger was the Angel of the Lord, he perceived that he would die. It was believed that if one had such a personal experience with the Lord that he would actually die (See 13:22; Gn 16:13; 32:30; Ex 20:19; 33:20; Is 6:5). Knowing the fear of Gideon, the Lord comforted him with the words that he would not die. ***Jehovah Shalom:*** After being reassured by the Lord that he would not die, Gideon built an altar. He named it, "The Lord is peace," a fitting name for an altar that reminds us that the presence of the Lord brings peace.

6:25-27 ***Thrown down the altar of Baal:*** Gideon lived in a house that had an altar of Baal. This altar of pagan worship was to be pulled down with an ox. The grove of trees, the Asherah, was to be cut down. He was to build another altar and offer a bull as a sacrifice on it with the wood of the

Asherah that he cut down. The symbolism was to manifest that he was personally repenting in reference to the idolatrous worship of Baal.

6:28-32 ***So that he may die:*** The extremity of Israel's digression into false gods is here manifested by the reaction of the people of the community to the deeds of Gideon. They would kill someone for religious sacrilege against their false gods, but not for serving the one true and living God. The pitiful religious condition of Israel at this time in their history manifests the extreme patience of God to preserve Israel in the land in order to bring about His eternal purpose. ***Let him plead for himself:*** The father of Gideon stood firm against those who would take the life of his son for the sake of giving honor to Baal. At least in this case, the father of Gideon had not fallen for belief in Baal. In verse 25 it is stated that Gideon's father had built this altar that was torn down. In view of what the father here stated to those who would kill his son for destroying the altar, it seems that the altar was built by the father in order to comply with the wishes of the community. He built the altar, but did not conform to any belief in Baal. One must never underestimate the power of community peer pressure to do that which is against the will of God. ***Jerubbaal:*** The name means, "let Baal contend." His name was later changed to Jerubbesheth (2 Sm 11:21). The change in the name was to rid it of the word "Baal."

6:33-40 ***The valley of Jezreel:*** This lush valley in the territory of Issachar (1 Kg 21:23) was the campsite where the Midianites and Amalekites camped in order to prepare for their annual raid on the farms of the Israelites. ***Abiezer:*** The Abiezrites were those of Gideon's own tribe. He then sent messengers to Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali in order to rally soldiers against the invading Midianites and Amalekites. ***A fleece of wool:*** Again Gideon needed the reassurance of the Lord. Not only did Gideon establish the occasion for the sign, that is asking that a fleece of wool be used, but also that the miraculous sign occur twice. The Lord accommodated Gideon because He knew that he had little confidence in himself. Gideon had enough faith to muster an army together for war, but not enough to actually launch the attack.

Chapter 7

7:1-3 Gideon's battle against the Midianites was to be a test of the faith of his men in the work of God in their lives. The battle was set up to bring glory to God in order that Israel know without doubt that God worked through Gideon and his men in order to defeat the Midianites. Gideon's victory over the Midianites in one battle would signal to the rest of Israel to take up arms against the Midianites and drive them from their lands. ***From Mt. Gilead:*** Since the camp of Israel was at Mt. Gilboa, we would assume that the translation here in reference to Mt. Gilead could be translated "through Mt. Gilead." ***Whoever is fearful:*** This question resulted in 22,000 going home. The fact that there were so many who were fearful indicates that at this time in the history of Israel the men of Israel had long forgotten their trust in God to fight for them. They were farmers settled in the land, and thus lost their bravery in reference to defending themselves against any enemies. Years of peace had brought lethargy in Israel. Gideon's battle against the Midianites was an opportunity for God to prove to them that He was still fighting for Israel. It was also an opportunity for the individual tribes of Israel to once again work together as a nation, instead of living so autonomously from one another. Gideon's call to all the tribes was a call to nationalism.

7:4-8 ***Test them:*** The Hebrew word for "test" is the same word here that is used in smelting of metal from ore. It was a test to see how pure they were for the battle in which they were to be engaged. ***Putting their hand to their mouth:*** This was the cautious group, for they drank by putting their hands in the water and drawing it to their mouths. They drank while keeping watch for the enemy.

7:9-14 ***Purah:*** This was probably the person who bore Gideon's armor. ***Dream:*** God evidently sent the Midianites the dream in order to spread fear among them. ***A cake:*** This was Gideon's army of farmers. ***Tent:*** This was the army of Midian that was defeated by the Israelite farmers.

7:15-18 ***Worshiped:*** Gideon worshiped right at the camp of the Midianites, reminding us that worship is not confined to specific locations. Worship results whenever one realizes the work of God, which in this case was Gideon's conclusion that the dream was from God.

7:19-25 ***Trumpets ... pitchers ... lights:*** Since the attack was launched at night, the actions of Gideon's army gave the impression that a large army of soldiers was attacking. The breaking of the pitchers created the illusion of sound that many men were racing down the mountain. The trumpets created the sound of calling men to war. With the 300 lights in the hands of the men, the Midianites would assume that each light represented many soldiers. The entire display was a bluff to the Midianites, a bluff that worked. Once the fear-stricken Midianites had been routed by the small band of Gideon's men, men from Naphtali, Asher and Manasseh joined them to chase the Midianites back to the desert regions east of the Jordan. ***Oreb and Zeeb:*** The heads of these chieftains, or princes, were taken to Gideon in order to confirm that the Midianites had been defeated.

Chapter 8

8:1-3 ***Contended with him sharply:*** It seems that the men of Ephraim were somewhat jealous, or at least felt left out of the initial battle. But Gideon answered them by praising them for their victory over Oreb and Zeeb. ***Abiezer:*** Reference to this person may indicate that the major part of Gideon's 300 men were his kinsmen.

8:4-9 ***The princes of Succoth:*** These leaders answered that they would not give provisions to Gideon in response to his request because Gideon had not yet won the battle. This is typical of those who are in fear of both sides in a civil war, and are often innocent victims. Two kings of the Midianites had not yet been defeated. If Gideon were helped, then these kings would return and punish them (Compare Gn 32:30). So Gideon says the same. If he is victorious, he will return and punish them. Gideon assumed that they should have known that he was fighting God's battle, and thus they should help God by giving his army provisions. The mistake of the princes was that they did not believe that God was working for Gideon.

8:10-17 ***Princes of Succoth ... elders:*** The young man revealed to Gideon the names of the leadership of Succoth, which leaders would pay the price for not helping the one who was delivering Israel from the oppression of the Midianites. Their unpatriotic attitudes would lead to their punishment. ***He punished the men of Succoth:*** Some have assumed that the wording here means that the men were tortured to death. But others have interpreted this to mean that they were beaten into submission. The key point was that the leaders had to pay the price for their poor leadership and lack of faith in God to help Gideon's men.

8:18-21 ***They were my brothers:*** The men whom Zebah and Zalmunna had murdered were the brothers of Gideon. They confessed to their crimes, and as the next of kin, Gideon had the legal right to render their judgment of death (See Nm 35:19,21; Dt 19:12,13).

8:22-28 ***The Lord will rule over you:*** Though victorious in his leadership over the Midianites, Gideon did not lose his humility, or this understanding that it was God who gave him the victory. Politics did not appeal to him, nor did fame. He clearly understood the theocracy of Israel, that only God would rule over Israel from heaven. Israel was to have no central leader or government in order that there be no distraction from the centrality of their King and government from heaven. ***Gideon made an ephod:*** The fact that it became a snare to Gideon indicates that the people worshiped this idol against the wishes of Gideon. He possibly wanted the spoils of his victory over the Midianites only because his kinsmen were traders. Unfortunately, he made this ephod that became an object of reverence in the years to come. The people had a yearning to pay homage to fetishes that presumed to have some magical influence over their lives. When men focus on idols and fetishes to bring them protection, they have digressed in their thinking from heaven to things of this world.

8:29-35 ***Played the harlot:*** We find it almost incomprehensible that Israel would soon turn from God after the victories of Gideon. But we must understand that at the time of this turning to idol gods, the people were turning to fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and pride of life. They were turning to depending on themselves, and thus created gods and religious behavior that conformed to every man doing that which was right in his own eyes. Since the Israelites were a stiffnecked people, they were very independent, and thus had a tendency to look to themselves and not to God. This national character continually led them to create any god in their minds that would soothe their consciences. We must also keep in mind that the history of the book of Judges covers a period of about 350 years. There is a great deal of time between the events that are recorded in the book, which time we often fail to realize when reading the book. ***Did not remember:*** It is easy to forget God's work in our lives when we are consumed with our own personal wealth. As each individual clan grew to expand their own personal wealth and possessions within their allotted territories of Palestine, they worked independently of one another, and often in competition with one another. They became rural clans independent of one another in a land wherein was left the influence of the Canaanites and their false gods. To a great extent, their turn to these gods was a failure of the Levites to continually minister to this rural culture by keeping their minds focused on the one true and living God. Or at least, the influence of the Canaanites with whom the Israelites associated was greater than the work of the Levites to keep their minds focused on God. The lesson is obvious. Bad fellowship corrupts good morals.

Chapter 9
THE TYRANNY OF ABIMELECH

9:1-6 ***Abimelech:*** This son of Gideon through a concubine from Shechem (8:31) did not have the humble spirit of his father. He sought to do that which Gideon refused, that is, become a king (8:22,33). ***Seventy persons ... or that one reign:*** His apostate thinking had missed the point in reference to Who was reigning over Israel. In the theocracy of Israel, God only was to reign. But in their apostate state in reference to the central authority by which the Canaanites ruled themselves, Israel's thinking was portrayed to the men of Shechem in this statement of Abimelech. ***Vain and reckless people:*** After stealing the money from the temple of the false god Baal Berith, he hired those who were arrogant, wanton, worthless and lewd. Abimelech knew that he could not carry out his evil desire unless he surrounded himself with men of similar motives. Evil motives attract those who are of the same character. ***Slew ... his brothers:*** Ruthless leaders who seek to dominate a country will kill the opposition. Under the supposed sanction of the people from Shechem, Abimelech carried out a genocide against the sons of Gideon. The young Jotham hid, and thus escaped this evil act of Abimelech. ***House of Millo:*** This was possibly a fortified military headquarters within the territory of the Shechemites.

9:7-21 The election of Abimelech was the result of two unfortunate problems that persisted among the people. First, while the humble and sincere busy themselves with their tasks, idle and arrogant men presume to rule. Second, family loyalties too often prevail over the interest of the general public. Thus those who are qualified to lead are often rejected by the people. In this fable told by Jotham, he spoke of how the citizens of Shechem (trees) looked to a bramble (Abimelech) to be their leader. Since neither the olive and fig trees, nor vine would reign over them, they sought out a bramble, a low-growing shrub. While the olive and fig trees and vine were busy with their work, the occasion arose for the morally debased to seize the opportunity to rule. Political aspirations appeal to the arrogant who are without honor in the community. In this fable of Jotham, his message was directed both to the unworthy character of Abimelech, as well as the fickle nature of the people of Shechem. The Shechemites felt no gratitude for the deliverance by Gideon who saved them from the oppression of the Midianites. Since Gideon would not reign over them, they sought anyone who would. Such illustrates the seemingly unquenchable desire of men to have some leader over them. This feeling is born out of the desire in society as a whole to collectively reject the reign of God from heaven. Men can deal with their leaders, but they cannot deal with or change the unchangeable God. Therefore, they seek for one to

reign over them whom they believe they can control. For this reason, righteous leaders often find it difficult to lead a people who want to do that which is right in their own eyes. At the foot of Mt. Sinai, Aaron fell victim to this public pressure by making the golden calf (See comments Ex 32). Today many righteous leaders fall victim to the same public pressure.

9:22-25 ***God sent:*** God worked in the environment in a way that contention developed between the elected (Abimelech) and the ones who put him in office (the Shechemites) (Compare 1 Sm 16:14). God allowed the political scenarios to develop in order to bring an end to the reign of the presumptuous Abimelech. ***Evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem:*** When agreements are made between evil men with unrighteous motives, the fruit of such agreements eventually develops into division and destruction. After Jotham had stated his fable, he fled and let the political game between Abimelech and the Shechemites play out its course. Wise leaders do not involve themselves in nonsense debates with those who thirst for power and pomp (See comments Ti 3:9-11).

9:26-29 ***Gaal:*** The festival of this context was usually one of celebration. In this case, however, it was used by Gaal as an opportunity to win the confidence of the men of Shechem. ***Hamor:*** Centuries before, Hamor was killed by Simeon and Levi. Hamor's son Shechem had raped Dinah, the sister of Simeon and Levi (Gn 34:2). Gaal thus appealed to the race pride of the men of Shechem. He challenged them concerning their desire to have an Abiezrite (6:11), Abimelech, the son of Gideon, reign over them rather than one of their own countrymen.

9:30-33 The conspiracy of Gaal was made known to Abimelech by Zebul who ruled in Shechem. Zebul's suggestion to Abimelech was a surprise attack against those who sought to oust him as their king.

9:34-45 God judged the Shechemites through the proxy of Abimelech's men. God will use unrighteous men to judge unrighteous people. The inhabitants of Shechem were slaughtered by the army of Abimelech. The city was destroyed and the land was sowed with salt as a symbol that it should never produce again (See Dt 29:23; Jr 17:6).

9:46-49 ***The tower of Shechem:*** This wooden tower of refuge for about one thousand men and women became a furnace for their execution. Abimelech burned to death those who took refuge in this tower dedicated to false gods.

9:50-57 ***A piece of a millstone:*** Through the unrighteous Abimelech, God judged the Shechemites. But after this battle, it was time for judgment to come upon Abimelech. ***God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech:*** God took credit for the death of Abimelech, though it was the woman who cast down the stone upon his head. God worked in the circumstances to bring about the end of the unrighteous Shechemites and the wicked Abimelech. We must never underestimate the providential work of God to bring about the end of evil people and their rulers. The righteous must patiently wait on the work of God.

Chapter 10

TOLA AND JAIR

10:1-5 ***Tola:*** Tola was possibly named after the son of his ancestor, Issachar (Gn 46:13). He is the sixth judge whom God sent to deliver Israel. He received little mention for his 23 years of service in judging Israel. ***Jair:*** Likewise, Jair, for his 22 years of service was given only three verses of Scripture. ***Thirty cities:*** We would assume that this family was wealthy throughout the region that Jair judged.

JEPHTHAH DELIVERS ISRAEL

10:6-9 ***Served the Baals:*** This is the first time we are given the numerous false gods to which apostate Israel gave their allegiance in rebellion against God. The word "baals" in this context is plural. Ashtaroth is mentioned, with the gods of Ammon, Moab and the Philistines. All these gods were the creation of men, who in rebellion against any authority above their own minds, would not seek knowledge of the one true and living God. Since all the Canaanites knew of God working through Israel to bring them into the land of Palestine, we would rightly assume that these gods were created in order to pacify the desire of men who sought to follow after their own lusts or pursue their worldly goals. They were hardened in that they arrogantly refused to accept the God of Israel.

10:10-16 ***Cried to the Lord:*** The oppressors in this context did not come into Israel as invading armies. In this confession, Israel stated that they had "forsaken our God and also served the Baals." They did not give up their knowledge of God. The text says "also," that is, they brought into their pantheon of belief the gods of the nations mentioned in verse 6. They became polytheists. Since they brought into their theology belief in the false gods of the nations around them, then we would assume that the reason for doing this was both social and economical. Socially, they intermarried with those who believed in the false gods. Economically, they sought to trade with the nations of the false gods. What started with a seemingly harmless union in cultures and economics turned into oppression. When those who believe in God seek to partner with those who do not have their God-given values, only oppression results. Being unequally yoked with unbelievers always brings oppression to the believer. Israel's history of doing such is surely the thought behind Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 6:14. ***His soul was grieved:*** Every time His people bring themselves into the oppression of unbelievers, God grieves. He allows his people to be disciplined for their own wayward sin. But He takes no pleasure in the discipline that He allows them to undergo.

10:17,18 The Ammonites gathered their army in order to put down the rebellion of the Israelites. The Ammonites wanted to protect their economic interests. More was involved here than political goals and false gods. Israel had traded with the Ammonites to the point that the Ammonites depended on their trade. It could have been that the Israelites had been brought into the servitude of the Ammonites in order to provide food for them. In Israel's rebellion, the Ammonites see their efforts to put down the rebellion as an effort to protect their food supply. Formerly, the Midianites from outside Palestine raided the Israelite farms. But in this case, the Ammonites would be putting down a rebellion on the part of those who were serving them economically. Since there were no gold or silver mines

in Palestine, we must always assume that in the oppression of Israel, food from farms was involved in the oppression. The oppressing nations, either from within or without, subjected the farmers of Israel to be farmer servants to provide them with food.

Chapter 11

11:1-3 ***Jephthah:*** This judge was a son of Gilead, the grandson of Manasseh (Nm 26:29,30). He was born of a harlot, and thus a half brother to the other sons of Gilead through his legal wife. He was eventually disinherited by his family, and subsequently lived in Tob. It is certain that he grew up with all the insecurities that come with a child who is rejected by the family. Nevertheless, God can use anyone to do His work. Unfortunately, Jephthah gained his experience in leading men by organizing a raiding party to plunder the goods of others.

11:4-11 ***Be our captain:*** The elders of the Israelite farmers knew that the one they had formerly rejected could lead them as the head of their army. The elders made a foolish oath here with one who had unscrupulous values. For the sake of their deliverance from the Ammonites, they agreed to have a vain person rule over them.

11:12-28 ***Israel took away my land:*** The Ammonite king was wrong. Israel had taken no land from either Moab or Ammon. When Israel was coming to the end of their wandering in the Sinai wilderness, they asked permission to pass through both Edom and Moab. The kings of these two nations at the time refused passage through their territory. Israel thus skirted Edom and Moab (Nm 20). When Sihon, king of the Amorites, refused passage to the Israelites, Israel attacked the Amorites in Jahaz. Jephthah correctly reasoned that since it was God who delivered the Amorites into the hand of Israel, Israel had a right to their land since it was the Amorites who took the initiative to attack Israel. The land could not be claimed by the king of Ammon, for it had been delivered into Israel's hand by God when Israel defeated the Amorites. ***Chemosh:*** The god of the Moabites. The Ammonites were at this time worshiping the god of the Moabites, as well as their god, Milcom (See Nm 21:29; 2 Kg 3:27). ***Three hundred years:*** Since Israel had lived in the land that was claimed by the king of the Ammonites for 300 years, the king's argument was not valid. Going back in years to reclaim land that one had taken from another was not a valid argument for taking land from a current occupant. The foolishness of the Ammonite king's argument was in the fact that he wanted to go back 300 years and claim the land as if his ancestors were the original owners of the land.

11:29-33 ***Jephthah vowed a vow:*** This vow of Jephthah was indicative of his character. We would expect something as this from a person who had few ethics and low morals. Jephthah was a person who was influenced by the apostate religious beliefs of the day. We must keep in mind that it was the elders who asked Jephthah to lead them. His calling was not directly from God, though God used an unscrupulous person as this to accomplish His deliverance of Israel from the Ammonites. ***Be the Lord's ... burnt offering:*** The "burnt offering" here would probably be spiritual in the sense of one "being the Lord's." Burnt offerings were to be made only upon the altar at the tabernacle through the ministry of the Levitical priests. That which was offered was totally consumed by the fire of the offering. Since Jephthah was later revered as a hero of faith (Hb 11:32), we would not assume here that a literal burnt offering is in his mind.

11:34-40 ***His daughter came:*** It was not only his daughter, but his only child. Jephthah had made a rash vow to the Lord, and now the price had to be paid. ***According to that which has proceeded out of your mouth:*** What is here manifested in the giving of a vow to the Lord is the complete obligation of the one who made the vow to keep it. Jephthah's daughter realized the binding nature of the vow, and thus resigned herself to her father's wishes. What is interesting about the vow was that it was made with spoken words only. There were no signatures on paper. There were no lawyers to authenticate and verify the vow and signatures. It was a time when even evil men kept their word. ***According to his vow:*** The statement here indicates that Jephthah offered his daughter as a spiritual offering to the Lord. The way the text reads suggests that the offering was that she not marry for the remainder of her life. The fact that she was offered as a human sacrifice does not correspond to the times, though Israel was debased in many ways. But we must consider that human sacrifices were forbidden by the penalty of death under the law (Lv 18:21; 20:2-5; Dt 12:31; 18:10). Such sacrifices did not come into Israel until the nation had totally digressed to the human sacrifices of the Canaanites. This came many years later during the time of Kings Ahaz and Manasseh (Compare 2 Kg 3:26,27). Add to this the fact that Jephthah is revered as a hero of faith in the New Testament (Hb 11:32). We would assume that such honor would not go to someone who had offered his daughter as a human sacrifice. On the contrary, the vow of Jephthah was probably something spiritual, though she had to pay the price. Since marrying in Israel was a very sacred honor, Jephthah's daughter wept because she knew that she would never be given in marriage by her father. Since it would have been a shame for her to weep in the presence of the men in her city, she chose rather to isolate herself until she had accepted her fate of life. ***She knew no man:*** That is, for the rest of her life she was not to marry. We would justly assume, therefore, that as other women who gave their lives to the ministry of the tabernacle (Ex 38:8; 1 Sm 2:22), Jephthah's daughter lived the rest of her life a virgin in complete surrender to the sanctuary of God at the tabernacle. ***Went yearly to lament the daughter:*** This event is not recorded in any ancient Hebrew literature. After Israel's repentance years later, they would certainly not have accepted what Jephthah had done in reference to denying one's daughter the honor of marriage.

Chapter 12

12:1-7 ***Why ... did you not call us:*** This accusation was not true, since the Ephramites were possibly called before the elders came to Jephthah. The motive for this complaint is questionable. It could have been that the Ephramites wanted some of the spoil of the Ammonites. Or it may have been that they wanted credit for defeating the Ammonites among their

own people. Whatever the motive, they did not come to the original call to battle, though they were called. ***Fugitives of Ephraim:*** This taunt spurred on the Gileadites to punish the hot tempered Ephramites. The Ephramites accused them of being a band of fugitives who took up arms against the Ammonites. Since they were not the official army who represented any of the tribes of Israel, they could not claim any victory in the name of Israel. The Gileadites defeated the Ephramites, and the Ephramites fled to their homes. Unfortunately, they had to pass over the fords of the Jordan before they could get home. Therefore, the Gileadites set up a "road block" at the fords. ***Shibboleth:*** The Ephramites on the east side of the Jordan had been separated so long from the tribes of Israel who dwelt in the main territory of Palestine, that their enunciation of the Hebrew language changed. In the enunciation of the word "Shibboleth" they could not say it as the Israelites who dwelt on the west side of the Jordan. The evolution of the Hebrew language into different dialects that represented the distant tribes during this period of time does reveal how some of the tribes of Israel had developed some nationalism among themselves in their autonomy from one another. Though they were common descendants from the same father, Jacob, and originally had a common dialect, they were being divided by their nationalistic allegiance in their tribal territories. In this divisive state of existence, it was easy for invading foreign powers to seize territory or oppress any one tribal group without the others coming to their aid.

IBZAN, ELON & ABDON

12:8-15 ***Ibzan:*** Little is known of the work of Ibzan whose home was Bethlehem, a small village in the southwest area of Zebulun. ***Bethlehem:*** This is not the Bethlehem of Judea. ***Elon:*** Little is known of this judge who ministered in Israel for ten years. The possible reason for the brief record of these judges is to inform us that God continued to work among His people throughout these difficult decades of sin and deliverance. We must keep in mind that the history of the book of Judges covers a period of about 350 years. ***Abdon:*** The mention of the sons and daughters of these judges indicates the family influence a specific judge had among the people. It seems that families carried on the heritage of their fathers who were key judges. Since the judges were mostly called by God because of their faithfulness, we assume that their children carried on a legacy of faithfulness throughout the lives of their families. The patriarch judge was mentioned in order to record the fact that their families sought to preserve the faithfulness of portions of Israel.

Chapter 13

SAMSON & THE PHILISTINES

13:1-7 ***Philistines:*** Since the story of Samson is more detailed than any of the other judges in the book, we have a greater description of how Israel lived with the Canaanite nations within Palestine. Israel not only became apostates to wrong beliefs, but they also did that which was contrary to the will of God. In this case, the Philistines from the southern coastal region of Palestine inflicted oppression on Israel. The Philistines were a people of war. They possibly emigrated from Crete (Am 9:7). They were probably in the Palestine area at the time Abraham arrived (Gn 20 – 22). When Israel arrived, they had settled in five key cities: Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath and Ashkelon. We are informed that they oppressed Israel for 40 years, which oppression would extend to the time when Samuel encouraged Israel to rid herself of their oppression (1 Sm 7). ***You will conceive:*** The conception and time of Samson's birth were announced by an angel (Compare Gn 17:2,9,10; Lk 1:11-17). ***A Nazarite:*** A Nazarite was either a man or woman who dedicated himself or herself exclusively to the work of God for either a defined period of time, or a lifetime. In this case, Samson was a Nazarite for life. Nazarites were not (1) to drink alcoholic drinks, (2) shave their heads, (3) or become ceremonially unclean by contact with a dead body (See Nm 6:1-21).

13:8-14 ***What will be the rule for the child:*** Since the angel announced that Manoah would have a unique child, then Manoah asked the angel for instructions concerning how the child should be raised. The angel answered by stating again that the child should observe the rites of a Nazarite. Thus God made the decision concerning whether Samson would be a Nazarite.

13:15-20 ***Prepared a young goat for you:*** The appearance of an angel was so vivid that Manoah assumed that food should be served to him after the custom of the hospitality of the Israelites. ***What is your name:*** The Hebrew word used here for "beyond understanding" can be translated "incomprehensible" or "wonderful." The same word is used in Psalm 139:6 and Isaiah 9:6. If the angel gave his name to Manoah, Manoah could not understand it. Names were given on the basis of meaning in reference to the one to whom it was given. Manoah could not have understood the name of the angel, for he had no comprehension of the realm in which the angel functioned and lived. ***Fell on their faces:*** When a man realizes the direct presence of God, as in this case through an angel, the natural response is to fall in worship on one's face to the ground. The presence of God through even an angel causes such a response. One should be cautious, therefore, in proclaiming that he has been in the presence of an angel, when at the same time he did not respond as Manoah.

13:21-25 At this time in their personal experience with the miraculous encounter, Manoah realized that the one to whom he was speaking was an angel of God. He assumed that he and his wife would die because they had come into such close contact with God through His messenger (See Gn 32:30; Ex 20:19; 33:20; Is 6:5). ***Samson:*** This name means "sun-lie," or possibly the Chaldean meaning, "to serve." ***The Lord began to move him:*** From his youth, the Lord began to reveal to Samson that he was a unique person. We are not told what happened as a result of the Lord urging him to do certain things, other than what is explained in the following narrative.

Chapter 14

14:1-4 ***Get her for me as a wife:*** The foolishness of youth is herein revealed. Not only did Samson fall in love with a

foreign woman (See Ex 34:16; Dt 7:3), he also demanded that his father procure her for him as a wife (Compare 2 Co 6:14). Samson's attitude in his demand upon his father reveals that Manoah and his wife had somewhat spoiled this young man in his youth. Nevertheless, God was using the unwise actions of Samson to generate an occasion for conflict with the Philistines. We must keep in mind in this narrative that Samson was specifically chosen by God to give Israel relief from the oppression of the Philistines. In the case of Samson, God was using his sin in order to deliver Israel. ***She pleases me:*** Any marriage that is based on physical attraction is a very shaky union. ***Philistines had dominion over Israel:*** Israel had unwisely entered into trade agreements with the Philistines. They then combined these agreements with the social practices and religious beliefs of the Philistines. This behavior on the part of Israel brought the rural community of Israel into subjection to the Philistines. Such was the natural social result when a rural farming culture makes friends with a warlike culture as the Philistines.

14:5-9 ***Lion roared:*** Sometime on the journey to Timnah, and not in the company of his parents, this event occurred. We would assume that this type of strength was unusual at this point in Samson's life. It was probably at this time that God wanted to build confidence in Samson for future encounters with the Philistines. For this reason God empowered Samson with the strength that was necessary to kill the lion. ***Honey in the carcass:*** This event took place several months after Samson had killed the lion. In violation of the Nazarite rites, Samson on this occasion, and on many other occasions in reference to the Philistines, came into contact with a dead body.

14:10-14 ***They brought thirty companions:*** When they realized the strength of Samson, they feared him, and thus, 30 Philistines were brought in order to protect the wedding party from Samson. ***A riddle:*** This riddle was proposed to the 30 "bodyguards." Though clear in interpretation to Samson, it was impossible for the Philistines to understand. Since they would not be outwitted by Samson, they devised an evil plan to discover the meaning of the riddle.

14:15-20 In this context is revealed the disloyal heart of Samson's Philistine bride. ***Samson's wife:*** Once a woman was committed to a man, she was considered his wife even before the completion of the marriage ceremonies. ***Lest we burn you:*** There was the motivation of fear behind the disloyalty of Samson's bride. Instead of consulting her bridegroom, she worked treacherously in order to spare herself and her family. The fact that the 30 companions at the feast threatened her with death is evidence that Samson should never have involved himself with such an evil people. But there he was in the camp of a wicked people who were living contrary to the morals and ethics of God. Samson's downfall was that he placed himself in the company of those who had no concern for the will of God. ***The seventh day:*** The riddle was given on the first day of the feast and the girl lamented with Samson for seven days. ***If you had not plowed with my heifer:*** This was a vulgar proverbial phrase that meant, "if you had not slept with my wife." ***Slew thirty of their men:*** When the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, he was given super human strength. This act of murder on the part of Samson was the beginning of God's use of his unrighteous nature in order to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. ***Samson's wife was given to his companion:*** In his rage, Samson did not complete the marriage ceremony. Since he left in a rage, the father of the bride assumed that Samson was no longer interested in her. She was then given to a friend of Samson, which friend could have been a Philistine.

Chapter 15

15:1-8 The father of Samson's wife assumed that he had rejected his Philistine bride because she had betrayed him in telling the secret of his riddle. Because of this, Samson felt justified to bring calamity upon the Philistines by destroying their source of food. ***Foxes:*** He tied the foxes tail-to-tail in pairs, and then tied a torch of fire to the pairs. The Philistines retaliated to Samson's deed by burning his bride and father-in-law. But this enraged Samson even more. He then took revenge on them with a great slaughter. Thus the unwise choice of Samson to involve himself with the Philistines in reference to marrying someone other than an Israelite resulted in the death of many people. Since it was the Spirit of the Lord who moved Samson to punish the Philistines, we would assume that God was using the unrighteous actions of Samson to relieve Israel of the oppression of the Philistines.

15:9-13 ***The Philistines went up:*** Thus the wedding scandal where Samson was betrayed continued to be carried out as the Philistines here send out an army of men to take vengeance on Samson. ***Three thousand men:*** The men of Judah greatly respected the strength of Samson. Since the men of Judah would sacrifice Samson for their own safety, they asked Samson to be bound and delivered to the Philistines, to which he subjected himself. Samson saw this as an opportunity to be delivered into the midst of a great number of Philistines.

15:14-20 ***A new jawbone:*** This jawbone was fresh, and thus not dry and brittle. The great slaughter of Philistines with the jawbone reveals the tremendous power by which the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson. ***Ramath Lehi:*** The meaning was, "the hill of a jawbone." This great victory of Samson over the Philistines was to intimidate them against oppressing Israel as long as Samson was alive. Since Samson did not judge Israel by organizing an Israelite army against the Philistines, we would assume that God's intention in using him as a judge was for the purpose of intimidating the Philistines. The intimidation lasted for a period of 20 years.

Chapter 16

16:1-3 ***Gaza:*** This was the most southern city of Palestine that was still controlled by the Philistines. ***Harlot:*** The life of Samson illustrates that God used the unrighteous actions of men to accomplish His work. In the case of Samson, he was his own worst enemy, and thus he eventually succumbed to his own unrighteousness. ***The doors of the gate:*** With the strength from the Lord, Samson took the doors of the city and carried them about 25 kilometers away to the top of the hill where Hebron was situated. This feat had its impact on those who sought to kill him, and thus we hear no more of their plot.

16:4-9 ***Delilah:*** It seems that Samson's association with Delilah was deceptive from the very beginning, for the lords of the Philistines conspired with her to discover the source of Samson's strength. ***Seven green cords:*** These could have been the cords that were used to fasten tents to their stakes. While still green they would have greater strength.

16:10-17 ***New ropes:*** These were stronger than the cords. Again, when Delilah cried out that the Philistines were upon him, Samson broke these as if they were threads. ***The seven locks of my head:*** Samson was now getting closer to the source of his strength, not that his strength was in his long hair, but that it was a sign of his Nazarite status. Of course, when Samson was awakened with Delilah's cry that the Philistines were upon him, he went off with the cloth-beam of the loom still attached to his hair. ***Your heart is not with me:*** Delilah complained that Samson did not trust her. Added to this was her continual nagging that he reveal the truth of his strength to her. ***If I am shaved:*** Alas, he foolishly revealed his secret that led to his doom.

16:18-22 ***Come up once more:*** The Philistine lords were surely disgusted with their being continually deceived and mocked by the failure of Delilah to discover Samson's secret. However, as with Samson, she was persistent in her request for she had in mind the great wealth that she would receive for her success in deceiving Samson. ***He did not know that the Lord had departed:*** Samson had moved so far away from the Lord that he did not perceive the fact that the Lord had now moved away from him. ***Put out his eyes:*** The Philistines took no chances. If somehow Samson regained his strength, they knew that a blind strong man could be beaten. ***Grinder in the prison house:*** For a great time Samson worked as a grinder of grain in prison. He worked long enough for his hair to grow again. Fortunately, those who had captured Samson forgot about the hair, which forgetfulness led to their demise.

16:23-31 ***Dagon:*** This god of the Philistines is believed to have been worshiped as far back as the 25th century B.C. To the Philistines he was the father of Baal. Dagon was the national god of Philistia. ***Let me die with the Philistines:*** Samson sought death with the Philistines rather than life as a blind man. He thus bowed himself against the two main pillars of the structure upon which the weight of the building rested. Because there were many in and on the building of large stones, its collapse killed hundreds of people, including Samson.

Social Chaos In Israel
(17:1 – 21:25)

Outline: (1) Idolatry of Micah (17:1 – 18:31), (2) Atrocity at Gibeah (19:1-30), (3) War against Benjamin (20:1-48), (4) Dissemination of Benjamin (21:1-25).

Chapter 17
IDOLATRY OF MICAH

Chapters 17 to 21 are an appendix to the book of Judges. The two principal events of this section are the establishment of the city and altar of Dan in the extreme northeastern part of Palestine (chs 17,18), and the almost complete annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin. Four times in the book it is mentioned that in those days there was no king in Israel (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). This statement assumes that when the book was written, there was a king in Israel. This would date the material sometime during or after King Saul. This statement that there was no king in Israel could be understood to mean that there was no king in Israel at the time as the nations around them had kings. Reference to Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron (20:28), would indicate an early date, sometime immediately after the period of the judges. Some Bible students assume that 18:30 is a reference to the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722/21 B.C. However, a possible alternative understanding of this verse would place the writing in the context of the period following the time of the judges when there was a captivity of a portion of the tribes that is not recorded in the Bible. We will never know the date of writing. This is not necessary when considering the book to be inspired. What we must keep in mind is that the time covered by the history of the book is about 350 years.

17:1-6 ***Uttered a curse:*** The mother did not know that her son had stolen the silver. When the superstitious Micah heard that his mother had uttered a curse on the thief, he restored the stolen property. ***Micah had a house of gods:*** These were idols that were carved out of wood or stone, with some made of molten metals. Instead of smelting their silver and gold into coins, the Israelites combined their apostate religious beliefs at this time with their economy. Their riches were smelted into idols that portrayed their beliefs in false gods, and subsequently placed on display as an indication of their wealth. ***Every man did what was right in his own eyes:*** This statement is later repeated in 21:25 in order to explain how the people had turned their thinking from God as their King, to a man on earth as their leader. Because there was no central government that was expressed through the establishment of a king, in their autonomy from one another as tribes, and then as rural farmers, they turned to their religious instincts that were influenced by the Canaanite nations with whom they did business and intermarried. Idolaters are those who have created a god after their own imagination and religious behavior after their own desires. When men forsake the absolute authority of the word of God, in the religiosity of their lives, they will become a law unto themselves.

17:7-13 ***Be my father and priest:*** Micah bought a preacher. The term "father" referred to a position of respect and influence. The term "priest" referred to the God-designated office the Levites were to have among the people of Israel. Micah thus obtained his own personal religious officer in hope that God would bless his idolatrous beliefs and behavior. This practice is not unlike the religiously institutional people today who take pride in their "priest" or "pastor" who is a symbol of their financial prosperity. The institutionally minded are able to obtain and maintain a certified professional whose duty it is to soothe the consciences of the ones who support the existence of the professional. The Levites were to work among all the people of Israel. They were not to be bought and confined to a particular individual or group of people in Israel (Compare comments Lk 4:42-44).

Chapter 18

18:1-6 Because the Danites had never fully occupied their territory, in this historical context they sent out a scouting party in order to find more territory to possess. ***Please ask counsel of God:*** The Levites were the "living Bibles" among the people of Israel. God spoke through them to the people, and thus they were to circulate among the people in order that the people be able to inquire of God. In this case, the Levite had been personally hired and confined to the house of Micah.

18:7-10 ***Laish:*** This was a Canaanite city about 125 kilometers (about 77 miles) north of Mt. Ephraim. The residents of this village made the same mistake as the Israelites at this time in their history. They lived autonomously from anyone with whom they could unite if they were attacked by others. Because of their desire to live so independently from others, they could easily be overcome by raiding parties because no one would come to their aid. People will usually leave those alone who want to live isolated from others.

18:11-26 ***The priest's heart was glad:*** At least this Levite assumed his responsibility of expanding his ministry to be more in tune with the will of God. Instead of being the hireling of a single man, he could assume his ministry of working among a single tribe of Israel. Of course, Micah complained about the Danites taking his silver idols and graven images, and his priest. They had taken his riches and his religious security.

18:27-31 ***They had no business with any man:*** The people of Laish lived agriculturally and economically autonomous from anyone who could help them in a time of need. For this reason, they were easily subdued by the Danites. ***Dan***: The city of Dan became the northern most outpost of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine. ***Jonathan:*** This was probably the name of Micah's Levite priest (17:7-13). ***Gershom:*** Jewish rabbis today understand that this Gershom was the son of Moses. If this assumption is correct, then the book of Judges was written early, immediately after the events of the judges. ***The day of the captivity:*** Some students have assumed that reference here is to the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C., or an earlier captivity by Tiglath-pileser in 733 B.C. However, in view of other statements in the book concerning an early writing, this is probably a captivity for which we have no record. It could have been a local captivity of the Danites by the Syrians while the Philistines were still in power in the southwest. It was a captivity that was fresh on the minds of the initial readers of the book, and thus needed no explanation. ***House of God was in Shiloh:*** The tabernacle remained in Shiloh, which was not the original purpose for the movement of the tabernacle. It was to be moved among the tribal areas. But because of the idolatrous apostasy of the tribal groups, there was no call for it to come to the particular territories of the other tribes. When the Israelites moved away from God, they did not want a reminder of God among them.

Chapter 19
ATROCITY OF GIBEAH

19:1-9 ***Concubine:*** A concubine was one who was legally bound to a man, but not as his wife (See Ex 21:7-11; Dt 21:10-14). In this situation, a Levite took a concubine from Bethlehem, who eventually sold herself as a prostitute. This entire event reveals the debased moral state to which even some of the religious leaders of Israel had digressed.

19:10-21 ***Jebus:*** Jebus, or Jerusalem, was occupied by the Jebusites until the reign of David. Instead of staying in this foreign city, the Levite went on to Gibeah where he and his concubine had to sleep in the street. Being found in the street by an Ephramite coming in from the fields, they were invited to stay in his house.

19:22-30 What took place here reminds us of the immoral and debased culture of Sodom and Gomorrah. ***Sons of Belial:*** Or, they were the sons of the Devil. The atrocity that followed resulted in the death of the concubine. The sin was so grievous that it was remembered for centuries in Israel (See Hs 9:9; 10:9). ***There has never been such a deed done:*** After the Levite took the body of the dead concubine home, he cut it in pieces and then sent the pieces throughout Israel. The horror of the dismemberment shocked all Israel. It shocked the Israelites into realizing that at least portions of Israel, specifically the Benjamites, had digressed into total moral degradation. If what was reported was true, then the Benjamites must be punished severely for the crime.

Chapter 20
WAR AGAINST BENJAMIN

20:1-11 ***Dan even to Beersheba:*** Israelites from the northern (Dan) and southern (Beersheba) extremities of Palestine assembled together in order to enact judgment upon Benjamin. ***United together as one man:*** At least on this one historical occasion after the death of Joshua, all Israel, except for Benjamin, was united together as an army in order to cleanse Israel of this wanton sin. The irony of the assembly for judgment was that this war was not against a Canaanite army, but against one of the tribes of Israel.

20:12-17 The lack of wisdom among the Benjamites, or their stubbornness, moved them not to give over those who were guilty of the murder of the concubine. Instead, they assembled their own army, which army was tremendously outnumbered by those of Israel who had assembled against them. They may have thought that certainly their brethren would not attack. They were wrong. Israel's disgust with the sin was greater than their respect for the Benjamites.

20:18-28 When they inquired of the Lord as to whether they should go up against their brother Benjamin, the Lord said to go up. However, Israel suffered two defeats with the loss of 40,000 men. We would conclude that the lesson God wanted Israel to learn was that they should never go against a fellow Israelite without paying a great price. These two defeats would remind them in the future that they should never fight among themselves. ***Ark of the covenant:*** This is the only time the ark is mentioned in the book of Judges. Phinehas: The phrase, "son of" probably refers to this Phinehas as a descendant from Eleazar, the son of Aaron. Phinehas was a common name (See Ex 6:25; Nm 25; 1 Sm 1:3).

20:29-48 Encouraged again by the Lord that they should go up against the Benjamites, Israel schemed an ambush which

was successful. As a result, 25,000 Benjamites perished. Except for 600 men who fled to the wilderness, they destroyed the livestock and everyone they found in the region. They burned the cities.

Chapter 21
DISSEMINATION OF BENJAMIN

21:1-12 ***They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly:*** The Israelites realized that they had gone too far in their judgment of their brother, Benjamin. Except for 600 men, they almost annihilated one of their tribes. Since those tribes who answered the call to bring judgment on Benjamin had sworn with an oath that they would give none of their daughters to the remaining 600 men of Benjamin, they asked among themselves if there were any among Israel who did not answer the call to assemble against Benjamin. It was discovered that the men of Jabesh Gilead had not answered the call. Since the survival of Benjamin was now on the consciences of those who punished Benjamin, they sent 12,000 soldiers to kill all of Jabesh Gilead except for those women who had not had sexual relations with a man. They found 400 virgins who were brought to be wives for the remaining Benjamites in order that no tribe of Israel be lost from the lineage of Abraham.

21:13-25 ***Daughters of Shiloh:*** Since there were not enough virgins for all the remaining 600 Benjamite men, they were told to kidnap the daughters of Shiloh when they came out to dance during their festivities. ***No king in Israel:*** That is, there was no central control of the nation as would be the case beginning with Saul. This statement could also be understood to mean that there was no king as the kings that existed among the Canaanite nations. Regardless of those kings to which reference was made, the Holy Spirit wanted Israel to remember through this record the days when there was no king in Israel. Since God knew that the Israelites would eventually cry for a king as the nations around them, thus establishing a lineage of kings throughout the history of Israel that would eventually lead them away from God, He wanted them to remember the days when they were directly under God's kingship. These were days when Israel did sin, but they were led back to God through the work of the judges and Levites who worked in Israel. God eventually conceded and allowed them to have a king, but He wanted them to remember the days when there was no king. In these days they existed as a nation regardless of a king. ***That which was right in his own eyes:*** Each was a law unto himself. Supposedly guided by the Levites, who often failed in their duties to move among the tribal territories and teach the people, the people of Israel in a rural environment lived after their own rules. They became so ignorant of the law of God that they lived by their consciences, which consciences were not guided by God's word. This is a sad conclusion to a book of history that revealed that it is not possible for men to live according to their own laws, for they continually digress in their behavior to live after their own lusts. This is particularly true in view of the fact that God's people are constantly influenced by the societies in which they live. The more ignorant God's people become of the word of God, the more they digress from God. It is for this reason that there must always be a high standard by which the laws of men should be guided. Societies that design their laws without God in mind will design laws that lead to the ruin of society. If the people of God in these societies are also ignorant of the word of God, then they will be led down the same path of degradation that society follows. If the book of Judges teaches any clear lessons, the most evident is that it is not within man to direct his own steps. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every disciple of Jesus to continually feed on the word of God. Christians must grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pt 3:18). A people who are ignorant of the word of God can never be a free people. This is especially true in reference to our knowledge of the gospel of the incarnate Son of God. It is the power of the gospel that delivers us from wayward ways. Those who do not know the power of the gospel, therefore, will always be controlled by the whims of a religious society that has brought itself into the bondage of deception. It is the gospel that sets us free, therefore, we must stay free.

Ruth

WRITER

It is not known who wrote this book. Some have attributed the book to either Samuel, Hezekiah, or Ezra. Since the Holy Spirit has not given us a clear understanding of who wrote the book, we assume that the writer is not important. The fact that it passed Jewish scrutiny of inspired literature in order to be added to the canon of Old Testament Scriptures is enough proof to consider it a part of the Holy Scriptures. The Jews acceptance of any Old Testament book to be inspired validates our acceptance of the same book.

DATE

The historical background of the book rests in the period of the judges from 1000 to 1300 B.C. King David is mentioned by name (4:22). We would assume, therefore, that it was written after his birth and during his kingship. Since King Solomon is not mentioned, we would assume that he had not yet been anointed as king in Israel. Samuel lived in the early reign of David, and thus, if he were the author we would conclude that the book was written sometime during the reign of David, since Ruth plays an important role in the genealogy of Jesus.

BOOK

The historical events of the book cover a period of ten to fifteen years. The name of the book is derived from a young widow named Ruth. Some have assumed that the book served as an appendix to the book of Judges and an introduction to 1 Samuel. However, its true purpose is discovered in 4:18-22 where David is mentioned in the genealogy of Boaz. The significance of this portion of the Messianic genealogy is revealed in Matthew 1:1-14 where it is recorded that through Boaz and Ruth, the Messiah was born into the world (See Lk 3:32).

The book reveals the spiritual stature that was characteristic of many people during the early history of Israel when many political events were transpiring, which events were described in Judges and continued in 1 Samuel. Throughout the cycle of sin and repentance of Israel during these years, the book of Ruth reveals that there were those in Israel who remained faithful to the Lord and thus carried on with their normal lives. After laboring through the national perils of the book of Judges, one finds relief in the love story of Ruth. Not all were evil in Israel.

The book reveals the life of the Gentiles, for Ruth was a Gentile who committed her faith to the God of Israel. Israel's priesthood to the nations of the world is revealed as Ruth is a true convert to the one true and living God. Ruth would be a descendant from Lot's son, Moab (Gn 19:37). She was a Gentile outside the covenant that God had established with Israel at Mt. Sinai. Through her marriage to Boaz, however, she and her descendants were brought into God's covenant with Israel. Though the Moabites were idolaters who worshiped Chemosh, she was converted to the God of Israel through the faithfulness of her mother-in-law, Naomi. One of the important lessons we learn from Ruth is that regardless of one's religious background, there must be a commitment to the one truth and living God once one discoveries His existence. The same is true with Jesus. Once discovered, a commitment must be made to Him alone.

Outline: (1) Migration to Moab (1:1-5), (2) The faith of Ruth (1:6-18), (3) Return to Bethlehem (1:19-22), (4) Ruth meets Boaz (2:1-23), (5) Boaz commits to Ruth (3:1-18), (6) Redemption of Elimelech's inheritance (4:1-12), (7) Ancestry of David (4:13-22)

Chapter 1
MIGRATION TO MOAB

1:1-5 ***When the judges ruled:*** The activities of the judges are recorded in the book of Judges. The book of Judges covers a period of about 350 years. We could assume from the statement that is made here that there were more than 14 judges for this great period of time. If there were only 14 judges, then there were possibly times when there were no judges ministering in Israel. Throughout the years of national sin and restoration, people as Naomi, Elimelech and Boaz sought to be true servants of God where they lived. ***Famine:*** This may have been a famine that was brought on Israel because of one of her periods of digression into sin. ***Elimelech:*** This name means "God is king." If the name were given by a mother and father who were truly God fearing, then we could assume that the family of Elimelech maintained this genuine faith. The name Mahlon means "sickly," and Chilion means "wasting away." Both names identify the death of these two sons of Elimelech and Naomi while they were in Moab. ***Ephrathites:*** These were from Ephrathah which was close to Bethlehem (See 4:11; Gn 35:19; 48:7; 1 Ch 4:4; Mc 5:2). Both Orpah and Ruth were Gentile Moabites.

THE FAITH OF RUTH

1:6-14 ***That you may find rest:*** It was the initial wish of Naomi that both Orpah and Ruth return to their home country in order to marry among their own people and have a home among the Moabites. ***Are there still more sons in my womb:*** This is a reference to the levirate law of Deuteronomy 25:5,6 (See Gn 38:8-11). If a husband died, it was the responsibility of his brother to take his widow as a wife and raise up a heritage in the name of his dead brother. Naomi, however, reminded the two young girls that she would have no more sons.

1:15-18 ***Your people will be my people:*** This was Ruth's commitment to change culturally in order to identify with the people of Naomi (Compare comments 1 Co 9:19-23). ***Your God my God:*** While in Moab Ruth may have retained some allegiance to Chemosh, the god of the Moabites. However, she was willing to truly convert to the God of Israel. She was willing to relinquish her past in order to remain committed to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and the future.

RETURN TO BETHLEHEM

1:19-22 ***Is this Naomi:*** The return of Naomi caused a stir in the community, which stir indicated that everyone knew that she and her husband had emigrated to the Gentile territory of Moab, but now had returned. ***Mara:*** This name means "bitter" or "sad." Instead of complaining to the Lord about her misfortunes in Moab, Naomi believed that it was the Lord's discipline that caused her affliction. She did not despise the discipline of the Lord (See Hb 12:7-11). We are not told if the hard times that Naomi experienced in Moab were God's discipline to bring her and Ruth back to Palestine where Ruth would become a link in the Messianic lineage of Jesus.

Chapter 2
RUTH MEETS BOAZ

2:1-7 ***Glean grain:*** The Israelites were not to harvest the grain in the corners of the fields. This grain was to be left for the poor to harvest for themselves (Dt 24:19-21). ***Grain:*** This would be any type of grain, but not maize, or corn. ***The***

Moabite young woman: Even the Gentile foreigners were allowed to glean in the fields. God established laws in Israel in order that everyone could have food. However, everyone had to work for the food they received by doing their own harvesting. There were no continual handouts in this case. Boaz noticed the hard working Gentile woman, Ruth, who was gleaning in his field.

2:8-13 ***My daughter:*** By making this statement, Boaz indicated that he was older than Ruth. From their first encounter, Boaz showed kindness to her in that he commanded that she be able to drink from the same vessels that were brought for his servants. Being amazed by his kindness, Ruth inquired as to why he should be so kind to a foreigner. Boaz explained that he had inquired from others concerning her devotion to her mother-in-law and the commitment she made to the God of Israel. We must also remember that Boaz was a descendant from the marriage of Salmon and Rahab (Mt 1:5; Lk 3:32). He had grown up listening to stories of his Gentile ancestor, Rahab, who had been shown mercy by Israel when they came into the land of Palestine. The faith of Rahab had been passed on to Boaz (Hb 11:31; Js 2:25). ***May you be richly rewarded:*** These statements of Boaz in verses 11 & 12 express the priesthood of Israel toward the nations. God established Israel as a nation of priests, and thus the Israelites were to minister their faith in God to the nations. In this historical context, Boaz was assuming his duty to carry out the priestly work of Israel in offering help to a Gentile woman. We must not forget this fact when studying through the books of Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings where there was general apostasy in Israel as tribal groups were infected by the sin of the people around them. Instead of Israel assuming her responsibility to preach the God of heaven to the world, they allowed the beliefs of the world to affect them. However, there were many individuals like Boaz who carried on with their priesthood duty to the Gentiles (Compare 1 Pt 2:5,9).

2:14-16 Boaz was a man of mercy and compassion. Not only did he give his servants special instructions concerning their treatment of Ruth, they were instructed that she be allowed to glean even among the standing grain of the field that was meant for Boaz.

2:17-23 ***Kindness:*** This is from the Hebrew word *chesed* which means "mercy," "lovingkindness," "goodness" or "loyalty." Boaz went beyond his duty of allowing the poor to simply glean the corners of the fields. He allowed Ruth to glean among the standing grain that was rightfully his. His "kindness" was a manifestation of God's grace. Through His grace, God allows us to come into His presence, where we as sinners, have no right to come. ***Close relative:*** Boaz was a kinsman. However, in this case he was not the nearest kinsman who would have the responsibility of redeeming a kinsmen's land that had been sold (Lv 25:25), or the duty to avenge the death of a kinsmen (Nm 35:19), or to marry the wife of a deceased brother (Dt 25:5-10). However, in this case he was the next in line to carry out such duties if no other kinsman came forward. In reference to Ruth, however, there was a kinsmen in this case who stood before Boaz.

Chapter 3
BOAZ COMMITS TO RUTH

3:1-5 ***Find a home for you:*** The harvest had now been completed and Naomi, in her concern for the young Ruth, suggested that it was now time for Ruth to have a home of her own. Ruth agreed, and thus Naomi instructed her in the customs of the land concerning a widow who would present herself to be eligible and ready to marry again.

3:6-13 ***You are a near kinsman:*** Boaz evidently did not realize that he had the right to take Ruth as his wife, since she had not made it known that she wanted to marry. In this statement, Ruth informed him that she was willing that he alone fulfill the levirate duties toward her. Boaz realized that her intentions were sincere in that he had observed that she did not chase young men or the rich. Boaz was one of common estate, and older than Ruth. By the way she conducted herself, he saw in her a genuine character. ***As the Lord lives:*** This was Boaz's oath to Ruth that he would make every effort to take her as his wife. However, there was a kinsman who was closer in lineage to Ruth with whom he had to consult for her hand. The near kinsman had to be given the first opportunity to take Ruth as a wife.

3:14-18 Boaz asked his servants not to tell others that a woman had come to his door at night, indicating that such had not happened before. Boaz was a man of moral integrity. He did not want Ruth or himself embarrassed. However, he fully understood why she came, for he did not know that he had the opportunity to take her to be a wife. From the advice that he gave her, we would assume that he had considered taking her as a wife, but did not know that she wanted to marry.

Chapter 4
REDEMPTION OF ELIMELECH'S INHERITANCE

4:1-6 ***The gate:*** Decisions, judgments and administration in Israel took place at the gates of the cities. This is where one went to consult with the elders. ***I will redeem it:*** Boaz was somewhat crafty in his approach to gain the right to marry Ruth. He first informed the near kinsman that there was a field of land that he had a right to buy. After hearing of the land, the near kinsman agreed to buy the land. But then, Boaz said that there were obligations that came with claiming the land. ***I cannot redeem it:*** When informed that Ruth came with the land, the near kinsman decided that he would not buy the land, lest he endanger his own inheritance. The land would eventually go to the sons of Ruth, and not to the heirs of the near kinsman. His investment would be lost once the possible sons of Ruth assumed the rights of inheritance. The near kinsman would then have to relinquish his right to both the land and Ruth.

4:7-12 ***This was the custom:*** Because the readers of this book had to be informed concerning this custom indicates that the events that transpired here took place many years before the writing of the book. ***Took off his shoe:*** When the shoe, or sandal, was given to Boaz by the near kinsman in the presence of witnesses, the land transaction was sealed. Boaz not only had a right to redeem the land, but also the right to take Ruth

as a wife. ***Rachel ... Leah:*** Since Boaz and Ruth were the forefathers of David, and in the lineage of the Messiah, what is stated here certainly came to pass. ***Famous in Bethlehem:*** In reference to the Messiah, His birthplace in Bethlehem brought fame to this insignificant village of Palestine, as well as to the family of Boaz and Ruth (Mc 5:2). ***Tamar ... Judah:*** This was the family through which came the existence of the village of Bethlehem (Gn 38:29). In the future, it would be in this small village that the incarnate Son of God would be introduced into the world.

ANCESTRY OF DAVID

4:13-22 ***Obed:*** The birth of Obed was the guarantee that the family of Naomi would continue. ***Provider for your old age:*** The children took care of the aged parents. ***Perez:*** Or Perez, was the son of Judah by Tamar (Gn 38:29). David came from the lineage of Perez. This brief genealogy reveals the purpose for the writing of the book. Though the ones who first received the book did not know the reason for this brief genealogy, we today understand because of the mention of David, through whom God promised that the Messiah was to be born into the world (See Mt 1:5,16; Lk 3:23,32). ***Salmon:*** In the genealogy that is here given we must assume the customary recording of Jewish genealogies wherein only the main personalities of the genealogies were included while some generations were left out. It is stated here that Nahshon begat Salmon, and Salmon, Boaz, covering a period of more than 250 years, the time between the death of Moses and the time of Gideon. This is too great a time for only two generations. In the genealogy of the Messiah, the wife of Salmon was Rahab, the former harlot (Mt 1:6; Lk 3:32; Js 2:25). But as the genealogy is here stated, Boaz was not the immediate son of Salmon and Rahab, though they were in the genealogy of Boaz.

1 Samuel

WRITER

Common Jewish tradition attributes most of the writing of the book to Samuel, a prophet and judge of Israel. However, since portions of the book were written concerning the death of Samuel, we would assume that these portions were not written by Samuel, but by another writer after the death of Samuel (25:1). Some have suggested that in view of the statements of 1 Chronicles 29:29,30, Nathan and Gad may have participated in the writing of some portions of this book, though the support for this conclusion is weak.

Samuel was born of Elkanah (1:1,2) in answer to a prayer by his mother, Hannah (1:9-20). He was of the tribe of Levi, and thus dedicated to the service of the tabernacle by his mother according to the law (1:24-28). He is considered the first of a succession of Old Testament prophets who ministered the word of God to the nation of Israel. However, in view of the actions of the "man of God" in 2:27-36, there may have been others who functioned as prophets in Israel, but were not recorded before the coming of Samuel. Samuel was the only person who functioned as a judge, prophet and priest for Israel (See 2:35).

DATE

In view of statements made in 5:5; 6:18; 27:6, it seems that the book was written sometime after the reign of Solomon, but before the Babylonian captivity. Thus the date would be sometime between 931 B.C., the time Israel divided into the northern and southern kingdoms after the death of Solomon, and 586 B.C., the date of the Babylonian captivity of Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel.

The books of 1 & 2 Samuel cover a period of about 105 years, from the birth of Samuel around 1115 B.C. to the ascension of David as king of Israel around 1010 B.C. Depending on which Bible historian is consulted, this period of time may vary from one author to another. We must keep in mind that the biblical writers were not concerned with establishing dates in reference to Jewish history. Their concern was only with the recording of events of the work of God in bringing about the divine plan of redemption, and the influence of the chosen people through whom God worked to accomplish His plan to the world. Establishing dates in the Old Testament in reference to our calendar today is often difficult. For this reason the biblical interpreter should not frustrate himself by seeking to establish exact dates for books, events and characters of the Bible. The information that is given concerning the time of writing of any piece of sacred literature was given for the benefit of the first recipients. Unfortunately, these dates are often obscure for the modern student of the Bible. Our interpretation, therefore, should not be influenced by exact dates.

We must not be frustrated with the exact dates of persons and events of the Old Testament. If we reject a particular Old Testament character, or book of Scripture, because we cannot establish a specific time of living or writing, then we have missed the point about which God intends that we focus. Our concern is what the Old Testament personalities, and the books in which they recorded history, teach in reference to our challenges today. We must not forget the admonition of Paul that he wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:11. These things happened to the Old Testament people and were recorded for our learning.

Samuel's Ministry In Theocratic Israel
(1:1 – 7:17)

Outline: (1) Birth of Samuel (1:1 – 2:11), (2) Early apprenticeship of Samuel (2:12 – 3:21), (3) National disasters in Israel (4:1 – 7:1), (4) Reformation under Samuel (7:2-17)

Chapter 1
BIRTH OF SAMUEL

1:1-3 This book begins with a history of the end of the period of the judges. It is a record of the beginning of the era of the prophets, which prophets would guide Israel until the time of Malachi, the last prophet of Israel. ***Elkanah:*** He was of the tribe of Levi (See 1 Ch 6:33-38). ***Two wives:*** Elkanah was a polygamist, which thing God permitted only because of the hardness of men's hearts (Dt 21:15). We must always keep in mind that it was always God's plan that there be one man for one wife (Mt 19:8). In this case, the typical social conflict within polygamist marriages was manifested. There were hard feelings and favoritism manifested among the three who were involved. Wives in a polygamist marriage are always struggling for the love of the husband. ***Shiloh:*** Contrary to the original plan of God, the tabernacle had remained in Shiloh since the days of Joshua (Ja 18:1). God originally planned that it be moved among the tribal territories in order that no tribal group be continually too far from it for the annual offering of their sacrifices. ***Eli:*** He was the high priest at this time. ***Hophni and Phinehas:*** These two sons of Eli were known for their corruption (2:12-17,23-25; 3:13).

1:4-11 ***Shut up her womb:*** It was an embarrassment in Israel for a woman to be childless. ***Worthy portion:*** Or, "double portion." ***Adversary ... provoked:*** Such is the social environment in polygamist marriages between the wives. There is always jealousy, and someone is usually in grief. ***Vow:*** In this case the mother made the Nazarite commitment to the Lord for her son (Nm 6:5). Though a Nazarite vow could be for a specified period of time, in this case Hannah committed her son for life. As the son of a Levite, and according to the law, this commitment of a son was assumed.

1:12-20 ***Wine:*** This word is from the Hebrew word *yayin*, which refers to that which is pressed from grapes. ***Strong drink:*** This word is from the Hebrew word *shekar*, which refers to intoxicating drink that is derived from the processing of grains, honey or fruits. ***Poured out my soul:*** These are precious words in reference to one's dedication in prayer (See comments Cl 4:12). ***Belial:*** The meaning is "worthlessness," "wickedness," or "rebellious." ***Gave birth to a son:*** God specifically answered the prayer of Hannah. God can open the womb of a woman in order that she bear a son. In this case, the mother asked that a son be given to her in order that the son be totally committed to the work of the Lord. ***Samuel:*** The name means, "name of God" or "a godly man."

1:21-28 ***Yearly sacrifice:*** As all Israelites, Elkanah gave his yearly offerings to the Levites as a tithe to the Lord. When the parents took Samuel to be given to Eli, they took a very generous offering in order to support Eli in his care for Samuel. ***Weaned:*** This took place from two to three years after birth. ***I have also dedicated him to the Lord:*** Or, "I have returned him to the Lord." As a Levite, Samuel was already dedicated to the Lord. However, in this case the dedication was probably to the tabernacle service under the care of Eli.

Chapter 2

2:1-11 Verses 2-10 are in beautiful Hebrew poetry. In these words, Hannah expresses great thanksgiving to the Lord. She prayed that she not become arrogant with the rival wife concerning the birth of Samuel. ***Rock:*** See 2 Sm 22:2,3; Ps 18:2; 28:1; 62:2,6. ***Talk no more:*** This is directed to Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, who formerly taunted Hannah concerning her inability to bear children before she gave birth to Samuel. ***Seven:*** That is, seven children. ***His king:*** This may be prophetic, though Israel sought for a king in Gideon (Jg 8:22). The yearning of Israel to have a king over them as the nations around them started long before Saul was anointed as the first king of Israel. ***His anointed:*** The word used here (*mashiach*) first referred to an anointed king. The word was later used in reference to the Messiah, meaning "anointed one."

EARLY APPRENTICESHIP OF SAMUEL

2:12-17 ***Did not know:*** Hophni and Phinehas had no personal relationship with God in worship and ministry. They became corrupt and wicked in character by taking advantage of those who sought to be obedient to God in offering their required sacrifices. ***Men abhorred the offering of the Lord:*** The Israelites were to bring their offerings to the priests in support of the Levites (Lv 7:28-34). Unfortunately, Hophni and Phinehas took advantage of the people. They took more than the portion that was allotted to them. They took advantage of the religious responsibilities of the people. Their greed was satisfied in the sincere offerings of the people. In this way, they were sons of Belial.

2:18-21 After the dedication of Samuel to the tabernacle service, the annual visits of Samuel's mother and father became precious for two reasons. Not only did they fulfill their obligations to bring their offerings to the Levites, they were also able to visit their son, Samuel. God's special blessing for Elkanah and Hannah was the birth of three more sons and two daughters.

2:22-25 The wickedness of the sons of Eli was to the degree that they committed fornication with women even at the tabernacle. God was forbearing with their sin until the time that they were slain for their wickedness. Though Eli's sons behaved wickedly, Eli was in favor with the Lord. Unfortunately, Eli's behavior was not followed by his sons who chose to live unrighteously. The sons were to be judged by God because of their own unrighteousness. They were responsible and accountable for their own sins. Regardless of any failings on the part of the parents, each person must give account of his own sins before the Lord (2 Co 5:10). God does not hold parents accountable for the sins of children who are at and beyond the age of being accountable for their own sins.

2:26-36 ***There came a man of God to Eli:*** This would be an unnamed "man of God" through whom God worked among Israel at this time. If we would refer to this person as a "prophet," then Samuel would not be the first known prophet

in Israel. It would be this "man of God," and possibly others like him through whom God was working. In this context he was functioning as a prophet of God. ***The house of your father:*** This would be a reference to the Levites who were represented by Moses and Aaron while they were still in Egypt. ***Kick at My sacrifice:*** Hophni and Phinehas were despising the offerings to the Lord because they were not satisfied with their share of the offerings that was to be given to the Levites. They wanted more. ***I will cut off your arm:*** The house of Eli had been unconditionally chosen for ministry at the tabernacle. But because of the wickedness of Eli's sons, his election for service would be terminated. ***And any of your men whom I do not cut off:*** Reference here is to Abiathar who escaped the slaughter of the priests of Nob (See 22:18-23; 1 Kg 2:26,27). God would raise up a faithful high priest in Samuel, as well as a priest through Zadok (2 Sm 8:17; 15:24). Those descendants that would be left of the house of Eli would look to Samuel and his descendants.

Chapter 3

3:1-9 ***The word of the Lord was rare:*** The Hebrew word here is *yaqar*, meaning "rare," though sometimes translated "precious." The meaning could be that there were few prophets who spoke the word of God (See 2:27-36). ***Lamp of God:*** See Ex 27:20,21. The time would be just before dawn. ***Did not yet know the Lord:*** He had personal knowledge of the Lord, but not personal experience. No prophetic visions or dreams had yet come to the young Samuel.

3:10-18 ***Came and stood and called:*** It would seem that this was a visional appearance before Samuel. In such an experience, words could be heard or things seen that were not physical. We would not assume that an incarnation of the Lord took place. The Lord told Samuel that the ministry of Eli was coming to an end. ***Ears ... tingle:*** This was the hearing of something that was dreadful (See 2 Kg 21:12; Jr 19:3). What was said to Samuel was that Eli, though a righteous man, had to pay the price for the wickedness of his sons. He had to because he did not with the authority he had as their father, correct them in their defilement of the tabernacle services. The price he paid was the termination of the priesthood from his lineage. ***Forever:*** The meaning is that with certainty the judgment would come upon the house of Eli. The impenitent rebellion of Eli's sons brought an end to the priesthood of Eli's house.

3:19-21 ***Fall to the ground:*** That is, the Lord did not fail to bring about the fulfillment of what Samuel spoke. ***Dan even to Beersheba:*** This was the typical manner by which the totality of the land of Palestine was described by its northern and southern extremities (Jg 6:8). ***A prophet:*** The law had already been revealed to Israel. However, in their often apostate state of mind, prophets were sent to teach the word of God. Through the prophet, God told them what would happen if they did not repent. And in order to repent, they had to listen to the instructions of the prophet whom God proved to be His messenger among them. In this way, the prophet was established as the authority of God in Israel. Since the Lord spoke through the prophet, the people were to look to the prophet for instructions, which instructions came from God. If they rejected the approved prophet of God, they were rejecting God.

Chapter 4
NATIONAL DISASTERS IN ISRAEL

4:1-4 It appears that the reputation of Samuel as a leader throughout all Israel intimidated the Philistines. As long as Israel was divided, she posed no threat to the Philistines. But when the Lord's work through Samuel brought the tribal groups together as one nation, the Philistines knew that they were in trouble. So the Philistines initiated the aggression in this context in order to disrupt the unification of Israel. They thus camped at Aphek and initiated an attack against the Israelites. ***Ark of the covenant:*** The ark was to remain in the tabernacle. It was never to be used as a good luck charm or fetish as the Israelites were here using it in their battle against the Philistines. Since the presence of God was associated with the ark, the Israelites assumed that the presence of God would be with them through the ark as they fought against the Philistines.

4:5-11 Upon hearing the great shout of the Israelites as the ark of the covenant came into their camp, and because of their polytheistic thinking, the Philistines believed that the great gods had come to help Israel. ***Smote the Egyptians:*** Though Israel's deliverance out of Egypt took place about 400 years before this event, the story of the plagues of Egypt were still in the minds of the people, having been orally handed down to them from one generation to another. ***Hebrews:*** This term was originally used by the Philistines as a derogatory reference of the Israelites. ***Israel was smitten:*** The use of the ark of the covenant as a fetish did not help Israel. God is concerned about the hearts of men, not symbols of religiosity. Since Israel's heart was not right with God, God did not fight for them on this occasion.

4:12-18 ***Clothes torn ... dirt on his head:*** This was an Israelite action of great grief and mourning. When Eli heard the report of the taking of the ark and the death of his sons, he was stunned. He subsequently fell backward from his seat and broke his neck.

4:19-22 ***Ichabod:*** This name means "no glory." The death of Eli's sons carried over into the death of the wife of Phinehas while she was in childbirth. Before she died, she named the son "Ichabod" as a reminder of the tragedy of the events that took place in the fall of Israel to the Philistines.

Chapter 5

In the history of the life and work of Samuel, chapters 5 & 6 are a parenthetical record of the problems that prevailed among the Philistines with the ark of the covenant in their presence.

5:1-5 ***Ashdod:*** This was one of the principal cities of Philistia. It was the religious seat of the area where the great idol of the Philistine god, Dagon, was placed. ***Dagon:*** The archaeological discovery of the Ras Shamra tables in 1929 on the Mediterranean coast revealed that Dagon was believed to be the father of Baal. In the events that took place here in reference to the demise of the statue, God illustrated that the re-

ligious imaginations of man as represented by the Dagon idol, were no match for His direct intervention. The Philistines correctly assumed that if Dagon were the father of Baal, then there was a God behind Baal who was beyond their imagination (See comments At 17:22-29).

5:6-12 Because the presence of the ark had caused great sickness in Ashdod, Gath and Ekron, the Philistines decided that they had to return it to the Israelites. Evidently, they concluded that it did not represent many gods as they previously stated. They only referred to it as the "ark of the God of Israel." Their deduction was correct, for there is only one true God. He is greater than the imagined "gods" of men. He is the God who cannot be controlled by the whims of men who seek to create their own gods after their own imaginations.

Chapter 6

6:1-9 ***Priests ... diviners:*** Every religion of man has those who take advantage of the religious inclinations of man. In this case, even the Dagon worshipers had their priests and diviners. The diviners were magicians or fortune tellers who teased the superstitious beliefs of people by their incantations. The priests functioned in the capacity of ministering the religious rites and ceremonies of the religion. ***The Egyptians and Pharaoh:*** About 400 years after the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the people still understood the truth that Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God. Even these pagan religious people understood the fact that it was not God who directly hardened Pharaoh's heart. God only presented the opportunity for Pharaoh to harden his own heart against the will of God. ***Cows ... cart ... calves:*** This was a test the Philistines made in order to determine if there was supernatural power at work in reference to the ark. If the cows smashed the cart in order to return to their calves, then the presence of the Israelite God was not with the ark of the covenant.

6:10-16 ***Lowing as they went:*** Against their nature, the cows proceeded on the designated route while lowing for their calves that they left behind. ***The Levites took down the ark:*** As the Philistines looked on, the Levites took charge of the ark. The Philistines certainly concluded that there was a God behind the presence of the ark that they did not fully understand. They concluded, however, that the ark was now in the hands of those to whom it was sanctified 400 years before at Mt. Sinai.

6:17 – 7:1 ***Seventy:*** There is a textual variant of this passage in various manuscripts. The original KJV reads 50,070. However, the reading of some manuscripts that God struck down 70 men of the people should be the favored reading. ***The people mourned:*** They were terrified at the awesomeness of God. Since God punished those who were curious and looked into the ark, they concluded that the ark was to be handled according to the instructions of God. ***Take it:*** The men of Beth Shemesh could not bear the presence of the ark. The men of Kirjath Jearim then came and took the ark. They placed it in the house of Eleazar, whom they consecrated to care for it. This was not the proper location for the ark, since it was to be located in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle.

Chapter 7
REFORMATION UNDER SAMUEL

The event of verse 1 should be the conclusion of what took place in reference to the return of the ark to the Israelites.

7:2-8 ***Twenty years:*** The ark seems to have stayed in the house of Abinadab until the beginning of the reign of David (See 2 Sm 6:3,4). The 20 years could have been the time between its arrival at the house of Abinadab until the time of the restoration of Israel that was led by Samuel beginning in verse 3. Instead of being in the tabernacle where it belonged, it was in the house of a man. ***Return to the Lord:*** On this occasion Samuel assumed the work of the judges. In calling the people to repentance, he militarily organized the people to deliver them from the oppression of the Philistines. The condition for accomplishing this feat was that they had to give their hearts totally to the Lord. In doing this they had to put away all the idols and idolatrous practices that were associated with the worship of pagan gods. If we would accomplish any restoration to the will of God, we have to do as Israel did in this context. They first lamented after the Lord. They then carried out the destruction of those things that stimulated idolatrous religious beliefs and practices. They then took action to deliver themselves from the oppression of the Philistines. ***Baals ... Ashtaroths:*** The Baals were the imagined gods of the Canaanites. The companion goddess, Ashtaroth, represented the fertility of crops, animals and man, and thus involved the religious behavior of the people. This deity was also known as Astarte, who was worshiped by the Phoenicians and Canaanites. This was Venus of the Greeks, the goddess of sex and fertility. ***Gather all Israel to Mizpah:*** Samuel knew that the gathering of Israel would arouse the Philistines to attack. So when the Philistine army gathered for attack, fear came upon the Israelites. Their turn to Samuel to plead to the Lord for them indicates that Samuel had by this time been completely accepted as the judge who would lead them and plead their case before God.

7:9-14 ***They were smitten before Israel:*** Even as the sacrifice of Samuel was being offered, the Philistines attacked. However, a supernatural thundering came from the Lord which terrified the Philistines. The result of the battle was that Israel beat the Philistines to as far as Beth Car which is about 8 kilometers west of Jerusalem. ***Ebenezer:*** Raising a stone as a monument was a common practice among the Israelites (See Gn 28:22; 31:45; 35:14; Ja 24:26). Ebenezer, meaning "stone of help," signified that the Lord had helped Israel to gain their victory over the Philistines. In order to receive God's help to this point in their struggle against Philistine oppression, they had to recognize their sins, confess before God, and then follow God's designated leader, Samuel. ***Came no more:*** Because of the victory of Israel that was led by Samuel, the Philistines did not come again into any territory that was controlled at that time by Israel.

7:15-17 ***Circuit:*** As a prophet and judge, Samuel gave himself to teaching the people. He did not expect the people to come to him at one location, but compromised in that he went to three key cities to which the people could come. In this way he kept Israel's mind and heart focused on the law of

the Lord. When God's leaders move among the people in their teaching of God's word, the people are guarded from apostasy.

Rise Of The Monarchies In Israel
(8:1 – 15:35)

Outline: (1) Rejection of God as king (8:1-22), (2) Anointing of Saul (9:1 – 10:16), (3) The election of Saul (10:17-27), (4) Defeat of the Ammonites (11:1-15), (5) Samuel's farewell address (12:1-25), (6) War against the Philistines (13:1 – 14:52), (7) Saul is rejected (15:1-35)

Chapter 8
REJECTION OF GOD AS KING

Chapter 8 records a transition in the history of Israel. There was a transition from the period of the judges in Israel to the rule of the kings. Primarily, this was the end of the direct theocratic rule of God over His people to His rule through a king with the exhortation of the prophets.

8:1-5 ***Samuel was old:*** When Samuel was old he entrusted the work of God into the hands of his sons Joel ("the Lord is God") and Abijah ("the Lord is Father"). As the sons of Eli, they too were tempted to use their positions for corruption, and thus turned to dishonest gain by taking advantage of the offerings that were brought to them by the people. They dishonored the name of their father by taking bribes, and thus gave twisted judgments. ***Make us a king:*** Because Samuel was old and his sons did not follow after the tradition of his spiritual leadership, the people sought for a king to whom they could transfer their allegiance. By this time in the history of Israel, the Israelites' sense of security had shifted from God to a man. ***Like all the nations:*** Israel wanted a centralized leader as the nations around them. This desire manifested their weakened faith in how God had established and maintained them as a nation, that He only be their king. For almost 400 years they had been governed directly by God. But now they wanted to conform to the political systems of man.

8:6-9 ***Harken to the voice of the people:*** This statement reveals how God dealt with Israel in reference to many of the Israelites' desires. He was not changing His law in order to conform to the wishes of the people. He was simply accommodating their increasing hardness of heart in order to maintain a greater purpose. He allowed their apostate thinking to prevail, but He had not changed His original purpose for Israel. He used their rebellious desire in order to carry on with His eternal plan of bringing the Savior into the world through Israel in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). ***They have rejected Me:*** Because Samuel was God's appointed leader, the people were actually rejecting God's theocratic rule of the people. Their faith was weak in that they wanted a tangible leader they could see instead of a God of spirit they could not see. But we must not assume that God was here changing His rule. Israel's desire for a king on earth instead of the King in heaven was only accommodated. But with the concession, God gave laws for the behavior of the earthly king. Because there was a king on earth did not mean that God terminated His kingship from heaven.

8:10-18 ***The behavior of the king:*** It is here that Samuel prophesied how the monarch would treat the people. The earthly king would demand soldiers from the people (vss 11,12), force upon them labor for his benefit (vss 12,13), take their property for his purposes (vs 14), and heavily tax the people (vss 15-17). All these demands of the king would become a burden to the people. However, the generations to come would have to bear the burden of this centralized government for which Samuel's generation cried. Once the monarchy of kings was started in the history of Israel, it could not be stopped by the people. Only when a foreign power invaded Israel was the succession of Israelite kings terminated. This took place first in the conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722/21 B.C. by the Assyrians, and then in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians' captivity of the southern kingdom, Judah.

8:19-22 ***Refused to obey:*** In his old age, the people became stubborn and refused to heed the warnings of Samuel. Though warned concerning the demands that a king would bring upon them, they persisted. This was a turning point in the history of Israel. The socioeconomic environment did not get better with the appointment of a king. It became worse. It was a time when God knew that His rejection of their desires for an earthly king could not be answered in words of prophecy, but with centuries of experience at the hand of unrighteous kings. Their first king, Saul, was an example of many kings to come.

Chapter 9
ANOINTING OF SAUL

9:1-5 ***Mighty man of power:*** Reference could be to wealth or social prestige, or both. Saul came from a family of leadership and influence. However, he had a sense of insecurity, always wanting the approval of the people. ***Handsome young man:*** Saul was one who made a good impression on others. He was a physical stalwart and handsome. The occasion for his meeting with Samuel took place when he sought some straying donkeys of his father.

9:6-10 ***A man of God:*** This was Samuel whom Saul hoped would tell him the way to go to find the donkeys. ***What will we bring:*** It was customary that when one sought advice from the man of God he was to give something to his spiritual leader (Compare comments Gl 6:6). ***Shekel of silver:*** When studying the history of Israel, we must keep in mind that there was no such thing as coins in the economy. Payments were made either in livestock or weights of metals. Coins did not come into the economy of Israel until the days of the Roman Empire when Rome introduced Roman coins. ***Seer:*** Reference was primarily to prophetic pronouncements. ***Prophet:*** The function of a prophet was to proclaim the word of God, though at times the prophet would foretell the future.

9:11-14 ***The high place:*** These were places of worship, which worship was frequently focused on the idol gods of one's own mind. To eat: Offerings were brought to the high place of worship where the people ate (See Ex 29:13,22; Lv 3:4,10,15). It was customary among the Israelites to bring their offerings for eating when they worshiped together. This custom was carried over into the assembled worship of the early church (See comments 1 Co 11:13-34; 2 Pt 2:13; Jd 12).

9:15-21 Captain: Prince, chief or head man. ***Reign:*** This word assumes that Saul was to be anointed as a king. ***Desire of Israel:*** The desire of Israel was to have a king reign over them as the nations around them. In this case, the desire was for Saul, though Saul had no idea what Samuel was saying. ***The least of all the families:*** Saul expressed his lack of confidence to Samuel by saying that he was not only from the least tribe of Israel, Benjamin, but also from an insignificant family of that tribe. Beginning from this humble statement of Saul, the Bible student must follow the digression of Saul into a twisted personality that often had psychotic fits of rage wherein he became murderous.

9:22-24 ***The shoulder:*** This special part of the offered animal was reserved for the priest. In presenting it to Saul, Samuel was giving him great honor. Samuel was ceremonially exalting Saul because he had been chosen by God to be the first king of Israel.

9:25-27 It was a time when the wise Samuel talked with Saul concerning things that affected the Israelites. Samuel would want to know of Saul's religious convictions, as well as his thoughts concerning the state of Israel. It was surely at this time that Samuel wanted to begin a long relationship with Saul, who in the future would go through many trials in leading Israel.

Chapter 10

10:1-8 Oil: Oil was used in the official anointing of Saul and all God-anointed kings after him (See Ex 28:41; 1 Kg 19:16). In this case there was a private anointing by Samuel that was later followed by a public and official coronation (10:17-25; 11:14,15). ***The Lord has anointed you:*** For one to be God's official representative as a king on earth, his anointing had to be from God, not man. No king in the future of Israel would be a representative of God's will unless he was officially anointed by God. ***His inheritance:*** Israel belonged to God because He gave birth to her. He delivered her from Egyptian bondage and brought her into the land of promise. Israel would not have existed if it were not for the direct work of God. ***When you have departed from me:*** Samuel prophesied signs that would be fulfilled the very day when Saul left his presence. The fulfillment of these prophecies was to reaffirm to Saul that he was the chosen one of God to be the first king of Israel.

10:9-16 ***Spirit of God came upon him:*** He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak forth the word of God. We are not told how the beholders determined that he so spoke, only that it was evident that Saul was speaking as the prophets spoke to the people. What is here revealed is that God, through the prophets, was speaking to the people. The prophets were the "living Bibles" among the Israelites. At this time in the history of Israel, there were other prophets than Samuel, for the word "prophets" is in its plural form. These prophets were possibly associated with the school of the prophets that was led by Samuel. ***The son of Kish:*** Those who knew the humble estate in which Saul had grown up were amazed that such a one would prophesy among the prophets. He was not considered to be a prophet because of his background.

THE ELECTION OF SAUL

10:17-27 In this public coronation of Saul, Samuel reminded the people how God worked among them as their king. By reminding them of how God worked in Israel in the past, they should have reconsidered why they wanted a king they could see in the present. ***Rejected your God:*** With the anointing of an earthly king, Israel was rejecting God's theocratic rule from heaven. ***Hid among the equipment:*** Saul hid himself because he was modest and shy. Unfortunately, this nature of his character drastically changed in the years to come. ***God save the king:*** This was the people's proclamation that they accepted Saul as their king. They thus committed themselves to pay homage to him and be loyal to his command. However, there were the sons of Belial who rebelled against the anointing of Saul. At this time they did not see in him the character of a king. Though they showed contempt for Saul's anointing, Saul held his peace in reference to their rebellion. Though the anointing of a king in Israel was not in God's original plan, He accommodated the wishes of the people. But when the king was officially anointed by God, then the people were to submit to his rule. If one rebelled against God's anointed, he was rebelling against God.

Chapter 11

DEFEAT OF THE AMMONITES

11:1-11 It was not long after Saul was anointed that his leadership was tested by the demands of Nahash in reference to the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead making a covenant with him. ***Jabesh Gilead:*** The close relationship between the Benjamites and those of Jabesh was in the fact that when Israel almost annihilated the Benjamites, 400 women from Jabesh were given to the men of Benjamin in order to preserve the tribe (Jg 21:8-14). ***The Spirit of God came on Saul:*** The empowering of the Holy Spirit generated anger in Saul concerning the demands of the Ammonites (Compare Jg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29). What the Ammonites demanded was both cruel and unjust. ***Fear of the Lord:*** When Saul made the call to all Israel, the response was fear in the hearts of the people. The result of the call was the assembly of 330,000 men ready for war. Because of this great army of Israelites, the Ammonites were completely overwhelmed.

11:12-15 ***Salvation in Israel:*** The nation was saved from the oppression of the Ammonites because of the leadership of Saul. This was the first event in the life of Saul that presented an occasion for all Israel to unite behind him as their king. The great victory of Israel emboldened them to subject any who would not submit to Saul. They were willing to find the rebellious ones who initially rejected Saul's kingship and put them to death (10:27). But Saul showed mercy, knowing that through their united victory over the Ammonites all Israel would come together as one under his reign. He had illustrated his ability to lead Israel into battle, and thus was confirmed by his leadership to be the king of Israel.

Chapter 12

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

12:1-5 At the time when Saul was confirmed as the king

of Israel, Samuel used the occasion to give his farewell to the people (Compare Dt 31; Ja 24). ***Witness:*** Both God and Saul were witnesses that Samuel had conducted himself with integrity among the people. He had not taken bribes.

12:6-15 ***Righteous acts of the Lord:*** This was the work of God in bringing Israel out of Egyptian captivity over 400 years before this time. Because He had established a covenant with Abraham and Israel, God was found just (righteous) in that He fulfilled His promises. However, regardless of the righteous work of God, Israel turned to the Baals and Ashtaroths (See 7:3,4). Nevertheless, God continued to deliver them out of the hands of her oppressors when they cried out in repentance (Jg 6:28-32). ***Bedan:*** This name does not appear in Judges (See 1 Ch 7:17), though it appears in the text of the Septuagint with the spelling, "Barak" (See Hb 11:32). The name could be another name for Obdon (Jg 12:13). But it could also be another name of a judge who is not mentioned in Judges. ***Nahash ... the children of Ammon:*** It may have been the threat of the Ammonites that encouraged the people to ask for a king. ***Fear the Lord ... obey His voice:*** In Samuel's concluding speech he wanted to remind the people that God was still their king. His law was that He still be the Eternal King of Israel regardless of the people's desire to have an earthly king. Nevertheless, their cry for a king on earth still manifested their disloyalty to God's theocratic reign directly from heaven.

12:16-25 ***The people greatly feared:*** In order to instill a final warning in the hearts of the people, Samuel called on God to evidence Himself through great thunder and rain. The result of the supernatural events was fear in the hearts of the people. They were to continue in their fear of the Lord. The thunder and rain was a sign of God's displeasure of their desire to have a king on earth to reign over them. Nevertheless, God accommodated their desires by working through kings that He anointed. ***Vain things:*** They were not to turn to the useless idols that they presumed would protect them (See Is 44:9). All such fetishes were presumed to have power because of the wayward imaginations of men. Men's faith in idols and fetishes is proof of their wayward thinking to do according to their own desires. ***The Lord will not forsake His people:*** For the sake of His name, He would not forsake them. The problem, however, is that the people often forsake God. When they do, they bring the name of God into shame among unbelievers. In this way they violate the commandment not to take the name of God in vain (See Ex 20:7). If one lives unrighteously while claiming the name of God, he has taken the name of God in vain. He has brought shame on the name of God by his unrighteous behavior. ***Ceasing to pray for you:*** It would have been sinful for Samuel not to pray for the people. ***Consider what great things He has done:*** When we remember the great things that God has done for us, we are motivated to remain faithful to His will. We serve, therefore, in thanksgiving. In this case, Samuel was embarrassing Israel by challenging them to remember the great things that God had done for them in the past. He was asking them to consider why they wanted an earthly king when God had worked so well for them in the past. ***You will be consumed:*** Israel did not serve in thanksgiving until the time of their captivity. They were thus consumed into the captivities of Assyria (721/22 B.C.) and Babylon (586 B.C.). Only a remnant remained after their consumption by the nations, which remnant never asked God again for a king to reign over them.

Chapter 13
WAR AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

13:1-7 The text does not give the age of Saul when he began to reign. Nevertheless, we could assume that he was about 40 since he had a son, Jonathan, who was already old enough to be a great warrior in Israel. ***Abomination:*** The Israelites were offensive, or odious to the Philistines. In every way, culturally and religiously, Israel was different from the Philistines. ***The people were distressed:*** When Israel saw the great army of the Philistines, they were so afraid that they hid in caves. We must keep in mind that Israel was a farming culture that took up arms only when they had to deliver themselves from their enemies. On the other hand, the Philistines were a warrior people who farmed for their subsistence.

13:8-15 ***Samuel did not come:*** For some reason, Samuel did not come to offer the sacrifice. Saul then took things into his own hands. He offered the sacrifice because the people were scattered. ***I forced myself:*** Saul offered this excuse to Samuel for offering the sacrifice. He told Samuel that he did it reluctantly. But Saul sinned, for it was not his duty to offer sacrifices. He did a foolish thing in breaking the commandment of the Lord. The consequence of Saul's deed was that there would be no kings coming from his lineage. His lack of respect for the commandment of God cost his heritage the opportunity of kingship. It cost the kingship of his son, Jonathan.

13:16-18 ***Gibeah:*** This was probably Geba where Jonathan had earlier routed the Philistines. The Philistines were at this time camped at Michmash from where they periodically raided Israel.

13:19-23 Verses 19-23 are a parenthetical historical statement. The information that is stated here is given in order to reveal the depressed state in which Israel was during the oppression of the Philistines. It was because of this oppression that Jonathan initiated a personal attack against the Philistines.

Chapter 14

14:1-14 Since Saul's men were down to about 600 men, Jonathan took the initiative to go out by himself. He went out secretly in order to teach the "uncircumcised" Philistines a lesson. With his armorbearer, he made a surprise attack on the Philistine garrison. He killed 20 Philistines. ***There is no restraint to the Lord:*** This was the motive for Jonathan's exceptional bravery. He knew that when the Lord was with one, he could do great things. Jonathan's confidence to carry out this individual attack against the camp of the Philistines was based on this belief that God was working with him. He knew that Israel needed an illustration of how God works with His people. The success of his venture, therefore, was to encourage the Israelite soldiers to take up arms against the Philistines.

14:15-23 ***The earth quaked:*** God was at work in this battle to discomfort the Philistines. ***Melted away:*** Saul's watchmen reported that the Philistines fled in confusion. The Hebrew text here states that they were going back and forth. They were in confusion, attacking one another in the middle of the night. ***Withdraw your hand:*** This was a command of Saul that the priest withdraw from the pocket of the ephod the Urim and Thummim. These were the lots, or counters, by which the will of God was determined. It is not revealed how these two objects were used to determine the will of the Lord. They were possibly drawn from the pocket of the ephod in order to determine "yes" or "no" answers. ***For the ark of God was at that time with ... Israel:*** This statement indicates a date of writing when the ark was possibly placed permanently in the temple in Jerusalem during the reign of Solomon. ***All the men of Israel:*** Saul took advantage of the confusion in the Philistine camp that was caused by the earthquake. All the soldiers of Israel were encouraged by the leadership of Jonathan and Saul. As a result of God's help, Israel was delivered on this occasion from the oppression of the Philistines. ***Hebrews:*** Verse 21 indicates that the writer made a distinction between the Hebrews and the Israelites. The word "Hebrews" referred to the Israelites who had been conscripted into the army of the Philistines, whereas the word "Israelites" referred to those who were with Saul and Jonathan.

14:24-30 ***Cursed is the man who eats:*** Saul had unwisely placed the soldiers under an oath not to eat until the battle was finished. Jonathan had not been informed concerning the fast. The unwise oath that was imposed on the people is revealed in the fact that they had no strength to inflict a greater victory over the Philistines.

14:31-35 ***The people rushed on the spoil:*** The result of the hunger of the people was that they ate the food of the Philistines without preparing it for consumption according to the law (Lv 17:10-14; 19:26; Dt 12:16).

14:36-46 ***Let us draw near to God:*** It seems that Ahijah, the priest, determined that the people should consult God before they ventured on in the battle against the Philistines. When they did inquire of God, God did not answer. The lack of an answer from God led Saul to conclude that there was sin in his camp. An effort was then made to find the one who sinned, which eventually revealed Jonathan who had eaten against the oath by which Saul had made the people swear. ***Though it be in Jonathan my son:*** The foolishness of Saul was now being revealed. He was a person of great stature, and at first humble before God. But now his folly was manifested by a rash statement that he would command that his son be put to death if the oath of the fast had been broken. ***So the people rescued Jonathan:*** This was a time when the will of the people prevailed over the senseless statements of a king. The word "rescue" is from *padah*, meaning "to ransom" or "to redeem." The people rescued Jonathan from the unrighteous schemes of the king. As in the case of many leaders who become dictators, this event probably aided in changing Saul's personality to being harsh against any who opposed him, which behavior was manifested in the latter part of his reign.

14:47-52 Saul was successful in his military ventures in delivering Israel from the threat of the surrounding nations. His kingship accomplished its purpose in the fact that he rid Israel of the oppressing raids and invasions of those who took advantage of Israel. ***Abner:*** Saul's uncle became the captain of his army. Though Saul was victorious over the majority of Israel's enemies, the warlike Philistines were a persistent thorn in his flesh. Throughout his reign, he had numerous battles with the Philistines. ***Any valiant man:*** According to the prophecy of Samuel in 8:11, Saul conscripted every valiant man into his army.

Chapter 15
SAUL IS REJECTED

15:1-6 ***I remember what Amalek did to Israel:*** The punishment of Amalek came over 400 years after his sins against Israel. When considering the judgment of God, time does not diminish just judgment. The Amalekites attacked the weak stragglers of Israel when she came out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 17:8-13; Dt 25:17,18). They again attacked Israel at Hormah (Nm 14:43-45). And again, they joined with Eglon, the king of Moab, in an attack (Jg 3:13). They are also listed with the Moabites in their raids on the crops of Israel (Jg 6:3-5,33; 7:12; 10:12). ***Utterly destroy:*** It was now time for the Amalekites to be completely annihilated from world societies. As with Jericho, all living creatures were to be destroyed (See Ja 6:17-21). There was to be no spoil taken. It was judgment time for a nation of people who had fought against God's eternal scheme of redemption through the nation of Israel. The judgment was harsh because of their harsh behavior toward God's anointed nation.

15:6-9 ***Kenites:*** These people, who were related to the Midianites, dwelt among the Amalekites. Saul warned them to separate themselves from the Amalekites in order that they be spared from destruction. ***The people spared Agag:*** This was rebellion against the command of God. Not only did they keep the king of the Amalekites alive, they also took spoil from them. Both actions were against the command of God.

15:10-16 During the time of his kingship, Saul digressed from the humble character of a lowly Benjamite family to one who willingly disobeyed the commandment of God. He became arrogant in his status as king of Israel. In assuming absolute power of the nation of Israel, the power absolutely corrupted his character. ***I regret that I have set up Saul:*** The original KJV reads that it "repented" God that He set up Saul. This word is not used in reference to God making a mistake. God does not "repent" as men repent. The meaning is "to change." The setting up of Saul was the occasion for God to change from the family of Saul as kings of Israel to another family lineage. The word "repent" focuses on the past, as well as the future. ***I have performed the commandment of the Lord:*** Saul was arrogant when he made this statement. His arrogance had blinded him to what the original commandment was concerning the destruction of the Amalekites. ***The people spared the best:*** Saul would not take responsibility for his own actions. If he was the leader, then he had to assume the responsibility for the actions of the people.

15:17-23 ***To obey is better than sacrifice:*** Sacrifice was

certainly commanded by the Lord. However, one's obedience in one area of God's commandments does not justify disobedience in another. We cannot atone for sin by obedience to law or doing good works. Partial obedience to law does not give one the right to sin in reference to other laws of God. Sacrifice was a specific law, but obedience is a general principle of the godly life. Though Saul obeyed the law to sacrifice, he was disobedient to the law to destroy the Amalekites.

15:24-35 ***I have sinned:*** We would question the sincerity of this confession in view of the fact that Saul seems to be more concerned about his reputation in reference to the people than the commandment of the Lord that he disobeyed (Compare vs 25 and 30). ***The Lord has torn the kingdom ... from you:*** The tearing of Samuel's robe was an illustration of the tearing of the kingship lineage from the house of Saul. ***Better than you:*** The kingship of the house of David would be better than the kingship of Saul because David would be a person after God's own heart. David would sin, but he would take responsibility for his own sin and not blame it on others. He would seek the approval of God over the approval of man. ***Saul worshiped the Lord:*** In view of Saul's behavior with reference to the commandment concerning the destruction of the Amalekites, and his later life of disobedience, we would conclude that this worship was only from the lips (Compare comments Mk 7:1-9). ***Strength of Israel:*** This is the only time this phrase is used in reference to God. He was the Strength of Israel in that Israel would not have existed without His help. ***Samuel mourned for Saul:*** Samuel was sorely disappointed in Saul as Saul digressed from his humble character to one who arrogantly disobeyed the will of God.

Decline Of Saul & Rise Of David
(16:1 – 31:13)

Outline: (1) Selection of David (16:1-13), (2) David introduced to Saul (16:14-23), (3) Prominence of David (17:1-58), (4) David and Jonathan (18:1-4), (5) Saul's jealously and hostility (18:5 – 20:42), (6) David as a fugitive (21:1 – 27:12), (7) Final days of Saul (28:1 – 31:13)

Chapter 16

SELECTION OF DAVID

Beginning with this chapter, the book of 1 Samuel covers God's appointment of David as the new king of Israel and the subsequent struggle between David and Saul. Saul knew that he was rejected as king, and thus carried out his rejection against David.

16:1-5 ***I have provided for Myself a king:*** God exhorted Samuel in order that he cease mourning over Saul. It was not a time for mourning, but a time to look to the future. God was telling Samuel to get over the past and focus on the future. There was to be a new king in Israel, one from the house of Jesse. ***Jesse:*** Jesse was in the lineage of Boaz and Ruth (Rt 4:17), and in the lineage of the Messiah to come. Boaz was from the lineage of Rahab, the harlot of Jericho (Mt 1:5). ***Elders of the town:*** Typical of all the cities and towns of Israel, there were elders of the city. ***Do you come peaceably:*** These elders feared the Lord and the authority of the Lord as it was manifested through Samuel. ***Sanctify yourselves:*** They were to consecrate, or set themselves apart for the work of the Lord. In this case, the small town, or village, of Bethlehem was about to be made a historical site in reference to the lineage of the Messiah (See Mc 5:2).

16:6-13 ***The Lord looks on the heart:*** If we would be as the Lord in our relationships with one another, then we also must look on the hearts of men, not the outward appearance. Appearances should never be the foundation upon which we judge someone. However, we do determine the heart of one by his fruits (behavior). ***There remains yet the youngest:*** We do not know the exact age of David at this time. He was old enough to watch the sheep. He was the youngest of Jesse's sons. He was a good looking young boy. However, God knew his heart and what this heart would produce in the years to come. ***Anoint him, for this is he:*** It was God's original plan to choose and anoint all the kings of Israel. At this time, it was the Lord who made the choice of David, not Samuel or the people, though this would change in the future when the people would determine their own kings. Eventually, kings would be chosen by foreign powers who dominated Israel. The anointing of David was the signal to others that God had made His choice in David as the new king. The anointing took place while David was young, though he did not become king until many years later. In view of their consternation with David as expressed in 17:28, even his brothers did not realize the reason for this anointing. We would assume, therefore, that this anointing was for the sake of Samuel in order that he cease from his mourning over Saul. ***The Spirit of the Lord:*** From the time of this anointing, the Holy Spirit endued David with wisdom and power. We would assume that the Spirit worked to protect David. Contrary to the character of Saul, as David grew he did not become arrogant. His confidence remained in the Lord, not in the approval of the people, which approval Saul often sought. David would be a king who always focused first on God's will, not the will of the people.

DAVID INTRODUCED TO SAUL

16:14-23 ***The Spirit ... departed from Saul:*** The vacuum that was left by the departure of the Holy Spirit from Saul was filled with an evil spirit, which spirit originated from Saul's own misguided desires. As David grew in the Spirit, Saul digressed into an evil spirit. ***From the Lord:*** That is, the Lord allowed the Devil to have his way with Saul. It could be that Saul digressed at times into a state of insane behavior, often becoming irrational. He could not handle his rejection as king. Dictators often become as Saul when they are rejected by the people. ***A mighty valiant man:*** Since the text states that this servant of Saul referred to David as a man, we would assume that this event took place sometime after the anointing of David as a young man. At least enough time had transpired to where David had established himself as a valiant and wise man of war. It was evident to everyone that David was one through whom the Lord was working. ***Harp:*** The playing of this oldest mentioned instrument in the Old Testament soothed the mind of Saul. The music was medicine to his mind, and thus stabilized his emotional state.

Chapter 17
THE PROMINENCE OF DAVID

17:1-11 There was enough time that elapsed between David's first encounter with Saul, and David's killing of Goliath in this context, that Saul did not recognize David when he presented himself in order to confront Goliath. ***Goliath:*** In accordance with a common practice of ancient armies, the champion of one army would challenge the champion of an opposing army. Goliath was over nine feet tall. His armor weighed about 150 pounds. The head of his spear was about 20 pounds. ***Dismayed ... afraid:*** They were dismayed for the simple reason that if a champion of Israel fought Goliath and lost, Israel would be subject again to the Philistines. They were afraid because no one in the camp of Israel could win in an individual struggle against Goliath.

17:12-19 At this time, Jesse was old in age. Three older sons of Jesse were in the army of Saul. As a young man, David was still a herdsman of his father's sheep. ***Take now for your brethren:*** It was customary for the families of the sons in the army of Israel to send food to their sons while they were in combat. ***Forty days:*** Goliath taunted the Israelite army for 40 days. Throughout this time, Israel failed to produce anyone who would accept the challenge of Goliath.

17:20-27 ***Armies of the living God:*** This statement of David in verse 26 manifests the faith of David, that he believed that God still fought for Israel. The fact that the present army of Saul was in fear of the Philistines, revealed their unbelief. As a result, Israel was shamed by the taunt of Goliath and the intimidation of the Philistine army. ***Living God:*** This phrase in reference to God is used in contrast to those gods that men created after their own imaginations. Imagined gods do not exist because they are invented by the thoughts of man. The living God exists apart from man, for He existed before the creation of man.

17:28-37 ***Pride and insolence of your heart:*** David's eldest brother was offended by David's coming and questions. His attitude was twisted in reference to David's motives. He thus twisted David's sincere faith into being pride and his confidence in God's help into insolence. ***Lions ... bears:*** Though these animals do not now exist in Palestine, and have not for centuries, they were evidently quite common during the days of Israel's early possession of the land. In this case, David's faith rested in the fact that he was able to kill both a lion and a bear. He gave credit to God for this, and thus concluded that God would also deliver Goliath into his hand. God's work in his life in the past gave him strength to deal with the challenges of the future.

17:38-47 ***Armor:*** In this case, David's victory would not be dependent on the armor of man. He trusted only in God. His weapons would be only those of a shepherd boy, which was a staff, a sling, and five smooth stones that would fly straight in the air. The sling was the shepherd's weapon to protect the sheep. In order to master the art of using a sling, David surely practiced many hours while caring for his father's sheep. ***I come to you in the name of the Lord of armies:*** David's courage did not rest in armor and physical stature. Neither did it rest in previous experience as a warrior. His confidence rested in the fact that God was with him at this time when the God of Israel was challenged by those who had created gods after their own desires. ***Lord of armies:*** Or, "Lord of hosts." God is master of both heavenly and earthly armies who represent Him (See Ex 15:1-3; Ja 5:14). ***So that all the earth may know:*** David's motive was not according to the accusation of his eldest brother, that he was proud and insolent. His motive was apologetic, that is, he wanted to prove that God was the force behind the strength of Israel.

17:48-54 The stone of David's sling stunned the giant by striking him between the eyes. David then killed him by cutting off his head with his own sword. When the champion of the Philistines was killed, the Philistine army could no longer trust in Goliath for their victory against Israel. They realized that the killing of Goliath placed them on the same level of strength as Israel. And since the Israelite army was encouraged by the death of Goliath, they fled.

17:55-58 The fact that Saul did not recognize David indicates that it had been some time since David was in Saul's court as a musician (See 16:23).

Chapter 18
DAVID & JONATHAN

18:1-4 ***Jonathan was knit with the soul of David:*** These two young men were companions in courage. They were young men of self-initiative who were brave against great odds. Jonathan and his armorbearer made a personal attack against the Philistines. David fought a lion, a bear and Goliath. Their personalities bonded because they were of the same character. ***Made a covenant:*** David and Jonathan entered into a covenant with one another, and sealed it with the exchange of gifts.

SAUL'S JEALOUSY & HOSTILITY

18:5-9 David became the envoy of Saul, representing him to the people and in battle. Because he was a part of Saul's court, and behaved wisely in the sight of all, he became popular among the people. ***David his ten thousands:*** Egocentric people who have dominant personalities cannot deal with competition. Saul thus became jealous of David. Because of David's popularity with the people – one thing that Saul always craved – David became the envy of Saul. But Saul also knew that the posterity of his reign had been rejected by God and would come to an end at the end of his life. Saul was not emotionally strong enough to handle the rejection of God, as well as the rejection of the people. ***Saul looked with suspicion:*** He kept an envious eye on David. When one is envious of another, he is always jealous of the one of whom he is envious.

18:10-16 ***Evil spirit:*** This was a psychotic state into which Saul was driven by his rage (16:14). The evil spirit is stated to have come from God because God allowed Saul's jealous emotions to run out of control. ***He raved:*** The root Hebrew word here, *naba*, does not refer to prophecy of the word of God as some translations render it. It refers to a state of hysterical frenzy that results in an individual. Such is manifested by uncontrollable gibberish, or ecstatic utterances from one's

mouth. ***Captain over a thousand:*** This move by Saul was possibly an effort to bring about the death of David in a battle with a much larger army of his enemies. One thousand men would be a very small army that would face an enemy of thousands. But all efforts used by Saul to eliminate David were used by God to prove that He was with David and his small army.

18:17-30 ***Oldest daughter Merab:*** In order that David lead his small army against the Philistines, Saul promised his oldest daughter to David. ***Who am I:*** Because of his humble background, David did not feel that he should marry into the royalty of Saul's family. Or, the meaning may be that David did not love Merab, and thus would not marry for political reasons. ***Dowry:*** This was a gift to the father for one's bride. In this case, Saul did not seek a dowry from David for his marriage to Michal. In an effort to have David killed by the Philistines, he asked for 100 foreskins of the Philistines. But the scheme did not work, for David brought 200 foreskins of the Philistines. Because David returned before the required time with 200 foreskins of the Philistines, we would assume that he knew of Saul's scheme to have him killed in some battle with the Philistines. ***The Lord was with David:*** Saul could clearly see this. He was thus enraged with jealousy, and became the enemy of David. We see the Lord working for the success of David in order that Saul be eliminated from the kingship of Israel. The termination of Saul's kingship, therefore, was emotionally painful. He did not just die a peaceful death, whereupon David succeeded him as king. The transition from the kingship of Saul to David was directed by God, but it was painful on the side of both Saul and David.

Chapter 19

19:1-7 ***Kill David:*** It seems that Saul's previous attempts to kill David were cunning and known only to himself, though David surely knew of Saul's goal to kill him. But now it was made public. Jonathan's loyalty to David over his father would be greatly tested because of this change in the efforts of his father to eliminate David. ***Good toward you:*** When jealousy reigns in the hearts of men, no matter how much good one can do, he will be criticized. Saul's jealousy toward David had maddened him. Saul's power was challenged, and thus he could think of nothing else than to rid the kingdom of his competition. ***Saul harkened to ... Jonathan:*** At this time in the drama between Saul and David, Saul's jealousy was calmed by the words of Jonathan. Saul recanted the command to kill David. Unfortunately, this calming of Saul did not last long. In his heart, Saul still wanted to kill David.

19:8-10 Saul's rage against David was calmed as long as there was no occasion for David to be proved stronger than Saul. But war again presented the opportunity for David to gain honor in the sight of the people. And so, Saul, as before, was driven by an evil spirit to kill David (See 16:15; 18:10). ***David fled:*** This was a change in the life of David. Because he knew that his life was in danger while in the presence of Saul, David became a fugitive. He remained a fugitive from Saul until the death of Saul and Jonathan in a battle against the Philistines.

19:11-17 ***Kill him:*** Kings that have been twisted by power are often driven to commit murder. In this case, Michal learned of the murder plot of Saul against David, and thus she urged her husband to flee. Michal's lie was recorded in this text as a matter of fact, for she lied in order to protect God's anointed, David. ***An image:*** This was a teraphim, or household idol that some Israelites kept in their houses (Ex 20:4-6).

19:18-24 ***And they prophesied:*** We must keep in mind that the Hebrew word *nada* is used for both ecstatic gibberish, which is a natural phenomenon that comes from the mouth of those who are caught up in self hypnotic hysteria, and also to those who are actually speaking the word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (See 18:10-12). In this context, it was surely the inspiration of the Spirit that moved these messengers. The reason this is the correct interpretation of this event was that the prophesying proved that God was with David to protect him from the murderous schemes of Saul. At this time in the relationship between Saul and David, Saul was evidently so removed from his relationship with God that he was oblivious to the work of God. He had hardened his heart and was driven by his obsession to kill what he thought was a challenge to his power in the kingdom. When hardened dictators feel threatened they will resort to murderous schemes to protect their power.

Chapter 20

20:1-11 This chapter reveals the extent of loyalty that can exist between two friends. In this case, Jonathan was more loyal to his friend, David, than to his father. All of the efforts of Jonathan to mediate between his father and David had failed. This failure set the stage for the tragedy of this chapter, where two loyal friends had to depart from one another. ***A step between me and death:*** Though true of all people, David realized that his presence with Saul could no longer continue. His time in the court of Saul was over. He had to become a fugitive because of the resentment of Saul. ***The new moon:*** This was the monthly religious festival (See Nm 10:10; 28:11-15). David originally intended to sit at the king's table for this festival, but planned a delay in order that Jonathan determine the reaction of Saul when David's seat was vacant. It seems that Jonathan still felt that there was hope in reconciling his friend and father. But such hope was futile in view of the fact that Saul was hardened against both God and David.

20:12-16 ***May the Lord do so to Jonathan:*** Jonathan here made an oath to David that he would seek to protect him from the schemes of his father. ***You will not cut off your kindness from my house:*** Jonathan knew that God would establish the kingship of David. He knew that this kingship would exist beyond the life of himself and David, and thus asked that David not cut off his house when he came to the throne of Israel. The humble nature of Jonathan was herein revealed because he did not presume to follow his father as king. He trusted in the anointing of David as the next king of Israel. His faith was in God, not in any thirst for power. The opportunity that Jonathan had to assume the power of his father, but refused to do so, reveals the godly nature of Jonathan. His faith in the work of God through David was greater than any thirst for power.

20:17-23 ***Stone Ezel:*** Or, "the stone of departure." After the signal was worked out as to how Jonathan would inform David that there would be no peace between him and Saul, Jonathan stated that regardless of what happened, he and David would be bonded as friends in the Lord. ***The Lord is between you and me forever:*** The word "forever" is used here as it is often used in the Old Testament. Emphasis is not on unending time, but on the surety of existence throughout time. Jonathan was saying to David that nothing would ever destroy their bond of friendship, though they would not be in the presence of one another in the future. They had a "forever" friendship, and thus on this occasion made a "forever" covenant. Regardless of the circumstances or environment, good friends are friends for life.

20:24-34 ***He is not clean:*** In order to partake of the festival, one had to be clean (Lv 13,14). Saul assumed that something had happened in the life of David that made him unclean, and thus he could not sit at the king's table to partake of the feast. ***Saul's anger was kindled:*** In this case Saul's anger was against Jonathan. His anger was kindled because he assumed that Jonathan had schemed with David to protect David's life. Saul realized that Jonathan was more loyal to David than he was to him as his father. ***You will not be established nor your kingdom:*** What Saul did not understand about his son was that Jonathan had no intention of assuming the throne of his father. Saul's dreams of having his son reign after him were thwarted by Jonathan's loyalty to David and belief that God had anointed David to be king. Saul thus railed against Jonathan for his loyalty to David. ***Saul cast a javelin:*** Jonathan now had firsthand knowledge of the extent of the rage that Saul harbored against David. Saul's casting of a spear toward Jonathan in an uncontrollable rage finally convinced Jonathan that there was no hope of reconciliation between his deranged father and David. ***He was grieved for David:*** We must not underestimate the genuine character of Jonathan. After being humiliated with statements of anger and rage, and an attempt made on his life by his father, he was more concerned for David than himself. Both he and David were bonded in friendship because both were of the same heart. They were men after God's own heart, and thus God worked in their lives to carry out the anointing of David to be the king of Israel.

20:35-42 This is the account of a painful separation of two devoted friends. It was a time when these two friends thought that they would never meet again, though they had a brief encounter later in life (See 23:16). ***Fell on his face:*** This action on the part of David indicates his homage that he paid to one who was robbed of his kingship by the hardened heart of an ungodly father. If Saul had not become twisted in his heart and disobedient to God, Jonathan would surely have been the second king of Israel. But Jonathan's kingship was stolen by a father who turned his heart from God because of his craving for power. We would think that Jonathan would be a bitter person. But because he and David were of the same heart, he was more concerned about the will of God being carried out in the life of David, than his own aspirations to be a king. Not enough honor has been given to this man in the annals of history. He deserved more than history gave.

Chapter 21

DAVID AS A FUGITIVE

21:1-6 **Nob:** See Ne 11:32; Is 10:28,32. This was one of the cities that was given to the Levites. It was a natural place to which fugitives could flee. What do you have on hand: The only bread that was available was that which was to be eaten by the priests alone (Ex 25:30; 35:13; Lv 24:9). In this case, Ahimelech was willing to allow David and his men to eat the bread if they had kept themselves from women (See Lv 15:18). By allowing David to eat the bread, Ahimelech understood the nature of the law of God. The law to preserve the anointed of God was more important than the law that only the priests were to eat the showbread (See comments Mt 12:3). ***Bread is ... common:*** Though David and his men were on a secular mission, the bread that was used for sacred things would not be defiled if he and his men ate of it.

21:7-9 ***Doeg, an Edomite:*** Ahimelech's action toward David would eventually lead to his death by Doeg, whom Saul later commanded to kill him (See 22:11-23). ***Detained before the Lord:*** His detention could have been because he was ceremonially unclean for some reason, or for punishment for doing something wrong. ***Sword of Goliath:*** See 17:51-54.

21:10-15 ***The king of the land:*** The residents of Achish knew of David's previous military victories. Because they knew of his military feats in the past, the inhabitants of Achish were afraid that David would do to them as he had done to others. ***Gath:*** This was a Philistine city. ***Acted insanely:*** In order not to fall victim to those he had previously conquered in battles, David behaved as if he were insane. The deception worked, and thus David was able to hide from Saul in a Philistine city, to which Saul would never have thought that David would flee for protection.

Chapter 22

22:1-5 While David was hiding in a cave, others came to him who were in need. This group eventually grew to about 600 men (23:13). It could have been that many of these had fled from the revenge of Saul who had become emotionally twisted, and thus sought to kill any who would align themselves with David. Others may have come to David who were simply fugitives from just judgment. We are told later that some of these men were unscrupulous. If Saul would become so enraged to throw a spear at Jonathan, then we must assume that there were many in Israel who had fled from the sight of Saul simply to escape the rage of an unrighteous king. ***King of Moab:*** David's father was the grandson of Ruth who was from Moab. It could have been that David found some relatives in Moab *wi***th** whom he could place his father and mother**.** Stronghold: Or, Mizpeh. David was encouraged by the message of the prophet not to be intimidated by Saul. He was thus told to dwell in the land of Judah. It could have been that there was a new threat from the Philistines in the land possessions of the Israelites, and thus God wanted David in the land in order to protect the people.

22:6-19 This incident reveals the moral degradation into which Saul had fallen as king of Israel. He had little sanctity for life, and in this case, no remorse about killing the priests

of God. ***Doeg:*** See 21:1-9. The report of Doeg made Ahimelech appear to be an accomplice to David's flight from Saul. The truth was that David had said to Ahimelech that he was on a mission from the king (21:2). ***You conspired against me:*** Ahimelech had in ignorance given David the showbread. But there was no conspiracy in his heart. In his own defense, Ahimelech reviewed the loyalty of David to Saul, and thus hoped that Saul would conclude that he also showed loyalty to Saul by his deeds for David. ***Slay the priests of the Lord:*** The severity of this insane action on the part of Saul was manifested in the fact that he even called them the "priests of the Lord." It was as if in his savage rage that he did not care if they were God's priests. Exercising fear not to touch God's priests, Saul's own soldiers would not carry out the slaughter. Saul then asked a foreigner, an Edomite, to do the deed. Eighty-five priests were murdered and the city of Nob, with all its inhabitants, was destroyed. Since God through Samuel had anointed David to be the next king of Israel, we would assume that Saul felt that all priests were conspiring against his kingship. The Bible interpreter would not be wrong to conclude that Saul was paranoid. In order to bring all priests under subjection by fear of him, Saul did what all tyrannical dictators do. He instilled fear in the priests of Israel by killing all the priests of Nob. We wonder why God would allow such a deed to be done, but we must not forget that God was preparing Israel for the reign of David. He was allowing Saul to digress in his reign to the lowest moral level possible in order that when it was time for David to reign, the people would gladly accept him with open arms. The people were denied the kingship of Jonathan because of Saul's sin. But in David, they would have one after God's own heart, a relief for a people who had been terrorized by their own king. Ruthless dictators often lead the way for those rulers who have a heart for the people.

22:20-23 When Abiathar reported all that Saul had done to Nob and its inhabitants, David was greatly sorrowed. He assumed the responsibility for the massacre because he had convinced Ahimelech to give him the showbread to eat. David invited Abiathar to remain in safety with him. When David eventually became king, Abiathar became the high priest of Israel (23:9; 30:7; 2 Sm 14:24).

Chapter 23

23:1-5 ***I will deliver the Philistines:*** In response to the first time David went to the Lord concerning an attack against the Philistines, his men objected. From their point of view, they did not want to be fighting both the Philistines and the army of Saul. But when David inquired of the Lord again, they were convinced that attacking the Philistines was the will of God. ***Ephod:*** Since Abiathar was now with the army of David, they had the opportunity to inquire of the Lord concerning decisions that were made. The ephod was worn by the Levitical priests. It was possibly used in a way whereby the Urim and Thummim were drawn from a pocket in the ephod to receive "yes" or "no" answers from the Lord (14:19). Determining whether the "yes" or "no" answer was from the Lord depended on the faith of the one who sought an answer from the Lord.

23:6-13 ***Saul secretly plotted evil:*** When Saul heard that David was in Keilah, he called his army together. We would assume that the army came together because they thought they were going up against the Philistines. However, Saul's real purpose was to call them together to go up against David and his men. Unfortunately, when David inquired of the Lord concerning the possibility that the men of Keilah would deliver him to Saul, he immediately left Keilah. The men of Keilah feared Saul more than their gratitude they had for David for delivering them out of the hand of the Philistines.

23:14-18 ***Wilderness of Ziph:*** This was hill country southeast of Hebron. At the time it was covered with a great forest, and thus offered an ideal place for David and his 600 men to hide from Saul. In the hills were many caves in which David could also conceal himself. ***Jonathan ... went to David:*** This covert visit of Jonathan with David was the last time the two would see one another. ***I will be next to you:*** Jonathan, though the son of Saul, knew that David would be king in Israel. It was only his desire to sit next to David in his position as the king. Jonathan's respect for the anointing of David as king, and his humility not to be jealous, has exalted him to be one of the great spiritual warriors of Israel.

23:19-23 ***He is very crafty:*** Saul had been informed by the Ziphites concerning the location of David. But he asked them to reconfirm David's location because he knew that David was very cunning. David was a survivor because of his wisdom.

23:24-29 The best way to stay at a distance from one's enemies is to move continually from one location to another. By the time the Ziphites had returned to confirm the location of David and his men, David had moved his camp to Maon. Fortunately, because of an attack of the Philistines, Saul had to divert his army away from pursuing David in order to defend the land.

Chapter 24

24:1-7 After defending Israel from an attack by the Philistines, Saul resumed his pursuit of David who was at Engedi. ***To cover his feet:*** Or, to relieve himself. Since David and his men were further back in the cave where Saul was, they interpreted the occasion as a providential work of God to deliver Saul into their hands. However, David did not come to this conclusion. ***Skirt of his robe:*** He cut off the edge of Saul's garment. ***David's heart bothered him:*** Even the cutting of a small edge of the clothing of God's anointed king greatly affected David. His respect for God was so great that even touching the clothing of an emotionally twisted king who was anointed by God troubled his conscience. ***David restrained his servants:*** David's men surely had some selfish intentions. If they killed Saul, then their living on the run would certainly have come to an end. Nevertheless, David, in respect of God's anointed, thought it better to be a fugitive than to desecrate the anointed Saul by putting him to death. David respected Saul as he would later want others respect him.

24:8-15 ***My lord the king:*** Once Saul left the cave, David emerged with the piece of Saul's garment. David showed respect to Saul. He assumed that Saul had been told lies concerning his motives by those who sought to remain in favor with Saul for their own selfish ends. If Saul fell as king, they would lose their positions and wealth that came with being loyal to

the king. For this reason, they surely continued to slander before Saul the actions and motives of David. ***Wickedness proceeds from the wicked:*** That is, men behave according to their character. If David was wicked, then he would have performed wickedly toward Saul by killing him in the cave.

24:16-22 ***Saul ... wept:*** Being presented with such an obvious act of mercy on the part of David, we cannot doubt the sincerity of Saul's response. Undoubtedly, Saul was quite shocked that he had come so close to death by the hand of one whom he had probably been told would have taken any opportunity to slay him. ***More righteous:*** Saul confessed that David was more dignified and just than he. David's actions toward Saul were more righteous than his own actions toward David. ***Swear ... you will not cut off my seed:*** A common practice that prevailed in Israel in the years to come was that when a king succeeded another king, the succeeding king would kill all the descendants of the previous king. This was done in order that one of the sons of the previous king not assume to reign in competition to the succeeding king. Since David had no desire to do such a thing, he willingly promised Saul that he would not cut off his lineage. Though Saul recognized that David was anointed to be the next king of Israel, Saul possibly thought that there might be a chance that Jonathan would eventually be a king of Israel. But such was not in the plan of God. Saul was formerly told by Samuel that none of his family would reign as kings of Israel.

Chapter 25

25:1-9 ***Then Samuel died:*** This was certainly a major event in the history of Israel since all Israel gathered for the funeral. Samuel was a great judge and prophet of Israel. But only one verse of the Bible is here given to the event of his funeral. God does not dwell on the death of His righteous servants simply because they have transitioned into a heavenly dwelling. In the minds of men, the funeral was a great event because men often focus more on the body of the person than the spirit that has returned to God. But in the eyes of God, the dead saint did not cease to exist, but only came into His presence. ***Carmel:*** This Carmel is at the southern end of the Dead Sea. It is not the Mt. Carmel to the north and on the west coast of Palestine. ***Abigail:*** She was intelligent and very beautiful. However, her husband was crude and dishonest. ***David sent out ten young men:*** It was reasonable for David to make this request of Nabal because David had protected the herds of Nabal from raiders that came from the desert. This was also a feast day, and thus it would have been hospitable on the part of Nabal to share with David and his men. ***Nabal:*** This person lived up to the definition of his name, which means "fool," "stupid," or "evil person."

25:10-13 Unfortunately, Nabal's response to David was contemptuous and harsh. Nabal's response was answered by David assembling 400 of his men to punish Nabal for his refusal to help God's anointed. The great number of David's men to punish Nabal indicates that the clan of Nabal was large, and thus a large army was needed to carry out the destruction of Nabal's heritage.

25:14-17 ***He reviled them:*** Or, he railed at them. Nabal's response was an expression of his uncouth and rude character. The servant also told Abigail that the result of this railing would be the calamity of Nabal. His contempt and ungrateful response to David would certainly lead to the termination of his heritage.

25:18-22 After being informed of Nabal's response to David, the quick response of Abigail indicates that she perceived that the end of Nabal was coming. Though she was married to a worthless person, she still sought to protect him from the judgment of David. ***The enemies of David:*** David realized that he was anointed by God to be king of Israel. His judgment against Nabal, therefore, was a judgment of God against one who had set himself against God. It is evident from this response of David that he at this time was assuming the responsibility of his kingship over Israel, though Saul still remained alive as the acting king. All knew that Saul had been rejected. They were just waiting for the time when God would providentially remove Saul and allow David to reign unhindered as king of Israel. But at this time, David is assuming the responsibility of a king in his judgment of those who would oppose God's anointed.

25:23-31 ***She fell before David:*** The legacy of Abigail is her wisdom. As his name is: Nabal behaved according to the definition of his name, that is, he behaved foolishly as an evil man. He was a "son of Belial," or a rebellious person. ***Fighting the battles of the Lord:*** It seems that all Israel had accepted David as the one who was defending Israel from her oppressors. Since this was so, then all Israel should have been grateful to David and his men for protecting the freedom of Israel. Unfortunately, rebellious and ungrateful people as Nabal refused to give credit to David for their freedom which he preserved. ***Bound in the bundle of the living:*** David's life was in the safekeeping of God's protection. ***No grief to you:*** When David would eventually become the uncontested king of Israel, Abigail did not want him to regret any rash actions on his part that would lead to killing innocent people. In this case, the rest of the clan of Nabal would have been innocent victims of the unrighteous Nabal.

25:32-35 David sensed that Abigail was sent to him by God, for he expressed gratitude to her for her wise advice. The tender heart of David is here revealed because he accepted the advice of a woman who pled for the case of her foul husband. David certainly saw in Abigail a genuine person for she maintained her dignity though she was married to an uncouth and rebellious husband. She did not seek deliverance from her husband, but that her husband be delivered from the judgment of David.

25:36-44 ***His heart died:*** When Nabal had recovered from his drunkenness in the morning, Abagail informed him of her encounter with David and his men. The news struck terror in the heart of Nabal. It was as if he knew he was a walking dead man, for surely, he must have reasoned that his sin would eventually be punished. ***The Lord smote Nabal:*** The news from Abigail was so striking to Nabal that he must have had a stroke or heart attack. Whatever the case, the Lord was given credit for bringing judgment directly upon Nabal for his refusal to help God's anointed in a time of trouble. ***Take you***

as his wife: Because of her wisdom and undeserved loyalty to her unscrupulous husband, David saw in Abagail one who was fit to be a king's wife.

Chapter 26

26:1-4 ***The Ziphites:*** Here is a similar event as that which took place in 23:10 – 24:22. The Ziphites again reported to Saul concerning the whereabouts of David. They possibly believed that they must stay on the good side of Saul, for they did not believe that David would be king of Israel. Upon learning where David was, Saul again sought him in order to kill him. It seems that Saul had forgotten the remorse he experienced when David had spared his life in the cave of Engedi (See 24:1-22).

26:5-12 ***Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed:*** When one was anointed by God in Israel, that person represented God's will on earth. If one struck the anointed of God, then it was as if he struck God (24:5). The godliness of David was revealed in the fact that he dared not strike the anointed of God lest he eventually pay for such a sin. ***The Lord will smite him:*** When God judged His anointed, as He did Saul, then it was the Lord's business to remove His anointed. ***Deep sleep from the Lord:*** This event was under the control of God. If their sleep were natural, then surely someone would have awakened and alerted the rest of the army. But because the Lord brought everyone into a deep sleep, David and Abishai were safe in the midst of an army of sleeping enemy warriors. God can do things beyond our comprehension.

26:13-16 ***David said to Abner:*** David addressed Abner in order to rebuke him for not caring for the safety of his king. Abner was worthy of death because he did not protect the anointed of God.

26:17-20 In his plea to Saul, David again proclaimed his innocence. He exhorted Saul when he said that he was out as one searching for an insignificant flea or a lone partridge in the mountains. In other words, David chided Saul for wasting his time in pursuing one who was insignificant in reference to challenging his kingship. David knew that God was working events to remove Saul. By trusting in the work of God, David was satisfied to wait on Him to carry out his providential work in the life of Saul. David was willing to allow Saul to live out his kingship without challenging his rule. David understood that these things were in the hand of God. They would thus occur according to God's schedule.

26:21-25 ***I have sinned:*** This was the same thing Saul proclaimed at the cave of Engedi when David at that time had the opportunity to kill him (See ch 24). During this encounter with David, Saul confessed that he had exceedingly gone astray. It seems that he was behaving as a schizophrenic, that is, behaving as two different people, depending on the situation in which he was at any particular time. This time he had become the repentant Saul, and thus invited David to return to his court to enjoy the fellowship of the royal family. But David's reply was to leave everything to the providential work of God. David had no thirst for power as Saul presumed. ***You will ... surely prevail:*** These words of Saul were prophetic. Saul knew that David would become king. It seems that he was intimidated by the goodness and just behavior of David. Saul was a person who always wanted the approval of the people. Unfortunately, he did not have a character as David that drew people to him. In his frustration he unleashed his inferiority complex on David in order to rid society of the one to whom the people were attracted.

Chapter 27

27:1-3 David knew that Saul would not pass into the land of the Philistines, lest he generate a war with the Philistines. He thus saw the territory of the Philistines as a place of safety from the pursuit of Saul.

27:4-6 ***Some town in the country:*** David wanted a place where his men would not generate any confrontation with the soldiers of Achish. He could thus dwell separate from the Philistine culture, but at the same time not go to war with the Israelites. Such would give the pretense to Achish that he had sided with the Philistines because the Israelites were against him. ***Unto this day:*** This indicates a date of writing for the book of 1 Samuel sometime after the division of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms. The south was called the kingdom of Judah. The division took place after the death of Solomon and continued until the captivity of the kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. The book would thus have been written after the division of Israel, but before the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.

27:7-12 During the time David and his men were in residence at Ziklag, they raided desert tribes to the south that were still within the territory that God had originally given to the nation of Israel as part of the promised land. There is no record in history of the Geshurites. The Amalekites were supposed to have been eradicated by Saul in his early reign (15:1-35). Though Achish did not understand the raids of David, we must conclude that he was continuing his responsibility of eradicating the Canaanites from the land, which his forefathers had failed to do. While in Ziklag, therefore, and in order to maintain favor with the Philistine king, Achish, David continued God's work to cleanse the land. In view of his kingship over the land that was yet in the future, David simply carried on as a king, but under the guise of being a refugee in Philistine territory, which territory was also a part of the land that God had given to Israel as the promised land.

Chapter 28

FINAL DAYS OF SAUL

28:1,2 The Philistines provoked another war with Israel. Though Achish asked David to join in the battle, David evaded the request by offering himself as the bodyguard of Achish. In this way, David would not have to fight against Israel.

28:3-6 ***Saul put away ... those who had familiar spirits and the wizards:*** At one time in the life of Saul, and while Samuel was still alive, he rid the land of all spiritists and cults associated with practices of sorcery and witchcraft (See Ex 22:18; Dt 18:9-12). But on this occasion, which is often the case, he was afraid, and thus turned to any source for comfort. When men are terrified, in their desperation they often resort

to their most primitive beliefs. Since the Spirit of the Lord had already left Saul, he grasped for any reassurance that might bring him relief from his fear.

28:7-14 This was a unique incident in history that is often misunderstood. A correct understanding begins first by knowing that God was in complete control of the events that transpired. The work of Satan is nowhere mentioned in the text. Nowhere in Scripture do we see any evidence that departed spirits may roam at will among the living. In view of this, we can only conclude that God was working in these events in order to leave us a record of the tragic end of the life of Saul and the extent to which he digressed in his faith before his death. ***Woman who is a medium:*** Or, a woman with a "familiar spirit." A medium was one who supposed he or she had contact with the spirits of the dead. The Hebrew word *ob* means "prattling" or "mumbling." The word was used to refer to those who were in a self-hypnotic state of behavior, and thus presumed to communicate with the spirits of the dead. ***Conjure up for me:*** That is, bring up from Sheol, the place of the dead (See Nm 16:30; Ps 63:9; Ez 31:14; 32:18). ***You know what Saul has done:*** She knew that her practice was against the wishes of the king. By the instructions of Samuel, Saul had eradicated mediums and witches from Israel. But this action was taken when Samuel was still alive. We would conclude, therefore, that under the direction of Samuel, the prophet of God, those who practiced sorcery were false religious leaders in Israel, for what they were practicing was not supernatural. As long as Samuel was alive, and Saul followed his spiritual leadership, Saul drove out those who adhered to any of the Canaanite religious practices. The witch of En Dor was a vestige of Canaanite religiosity. ***She cried with a loud voice:*** As soon as Saul made the request in verse 11, Samuel appeared in verse 12. The text indicates that the woman had never before performed any such incantations. The request of Saul was immediate. It was God, not the medium, who brought Samuel to life in the mind of the woman. The fact that the medium cried out in terror is evidence that she had never experienced something as this before, thus indicating that she had nothing to do with Samuel coming to life. She was only a bystander to the work of God to communicate to Saul that his days were numbered. ***Gods:*** This word is from the Hebrew *ha elohim*, a reference in this context to false gods, angels, and even men of authority on earth. In this case, it would refer to godlike beings. ***What is his form:*** Saul did not see in his mind what the medium envisioned. ***What did you see:*** Since Saul saw nothing, we must conclude that God brought the woman into a state of vision, in which experience, what she saw was lifelike. In a state of vision, the beholder could not tell the difference between that which was real and that which was the product of a God-inspired experience in one's mind. In this case, Samuel was not actually incarnated into the flesh of a man, neither was a spirit of his appearance revealed that could be seen by the medium or Saul. The bringing up of Samuel was only in the mind of the woman.

28:15-19 ***Samuel said:*** We are not told whether Samuel spoke through the medium, or directly to Saul. We assume that the speaking was directly to Saul, but not necessarily through the incarnation of a body, or the apparition of a spirit. It is simply stated that a conversation went on between Saul and Samuel. The conversation was in a vision, for Samuel's mouth was not incarnate in order for him to converse as people do in life. The vision at this moment in the experience had possibly gone from the medium to the mind of Saul. ***The Lord ... has become your enemy:*** When this happens, one's existence and work are over (See comments Js 4:4). God became the enemy of Saul for two reasons. First, Saul did not obey the Lord, and second, he did not eradicate the Amalekites who had taken advantage of the weakness of Israel when the nation came out of Egyptian bondage.

28:20-25 ***Saul immediately fell ... on the ground:*** Saul previously knew that God had given the kingdom to David, for he knew from the time of Samuel that David had been anointed to be the king of Israel. But the reality of the end of his own kingship, and the death of his sons, which would terminate the lineage of his family as kings of Israel, was made vividly real by this vision. The reality was too much for an old man whose hopes had now been totally dashed by the words of Samuel. Saul realized that his end had come.

Chapter 29

29:1-5 ***What are these Hebrews doing here:*** The term "Hebrews" was not meant in a kind way. It was the Philistines' derogatory term that was used in reference to the Israelites. Though Achish was loyal to David and his men, the other Philistine leaders did not agree with his association with the Hebrews. Of course, they were right. Achish was wrong because history had proven that there never was any real friendship between the Philistines and Israel. ***These years:*** It had been about a year and four months (See 27:7). ***Is this not David:*** David's reputation as a successful military leader of Israel was well known among the Philistines.

29:6-11 ***The lords do not favor you:*** Achish apologized to David and sent him home. David had dealt honorably with Achish, and Achish had returned the favor. However, David accepted the advice of Achish to return home, knowing that he would not go to war against his fellow Israelites. ***As an angel of god:*** In this statement Achish did not use the name Yahweh, the Israelite name used in reference to the God of Israel. He used the phrase ha *elohim*, a general reference to "the gods."

Chapter 30

30:1-6 ***Amalekites had invaded:*** The sin of Saul in not destroying the Amalekites resulted in tragedy in reference to God's anointed, David. While gone from Ziklag, the Amalekites took advantage of the opportunity to capture and burn Ziklag. ***No more power to weep:*** They exhausted themselves with grief over the capture of their wives and children. The grief was so great that there was talk of mutiny among David's own men. ***David encouraged himself in the Lord:*** Great leaders often stand alone at the front. Because they are leaders, they must take responsibility for tragedies as this that are mentioned in this historical context. Nevertheless, great spiritual leaders find their encouragement in their relationship with God, since those they lead often offer little encouragement. For this reason, those who would lead God's people must

have a strong dependence on God in order that they might find comfort in Him.

30:7-15 ***Two hundred remained behind:*** We could assume that the older men remained behind because they could not keep up with the younger men. ***An Egyptian:*** The Amalekites were a ruthless people. In this case, they were in a hurry to return to their territory before the Philistines returned from their battle with Israel. They were in such a hurry that this young servant was left for dead in the wilderness.

30:16-20 Because of their great victory in the raids on territory in Philistia and Judah, the Amalekites were celebrating with a drunken party. As a result, they were caught off guard by David and his men. Except for 400 men on camels, the rest of the Amalekites were killed. All the captives were rescued, plus all the spoil that the Amalekites had taken from the Philistines and Israelites. In reference to the spoil, David and his men actually ended up with more than they had lost, for they were able to capture the spoil that was taken by the Amalekites from the Philistine cities.

30:21-31 ***We will not give them any of the spoil:*** This complaint came from wicked and worthless men of the 400 who went with David to engage the Amalekites in battle. But in verse 24 David explained the principle by which all his battles would be governed. Those who support the frontline soldiers are as important in any victory as those who directly engage the enemy in battle (See Nm 31:27). From this victory, therefore, David established a principle for his army, as well as for those who followed him. ***He sent of the spoil to the elders ... friends:*** It was not that David was buying their loyalty. They had already been his friends throughout his time as a fugitive from Saul. The gift of the spoil was in appreciation for their loyalty and their recognition that he was the anointed king of Israel.

Chapter 31

31:1-13 (1 Ch 10:1-12) ***The battle went fierce against Saul:*** When Achish had previously requested that David not go with the Philistines in this battle against Israel, he actually did him a great favor. It was during this series of battles that David's beloved friend Jonathan was slain by the Philistines. It was a series of conflicts wherein Israel was totally defeated. We could assume that this was a providential victory of the Philistines over Israel because God had by this time determined that Saul and his sons were to be terminated from the leadership of Israel. ***Saul said to his armorbearer:*** Being mortally wounded, Saul asked for death from his armorbearer because he did not want to suffer the humiliation of being tortured to death by the Philistines. But because his armorbearer would not raise his hand against God's anointed, Saul had to commit suicide. ***They forsook the cities and fled:*** Fear gripped Israel in this dark period of their history. They abandoned their cities and fled into the wilderness as fugitives. Those who had made David a fugitive, were now themselves fugitives from the Philistines. They reaped what they had sown. ***Fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan:*** Stripping and hanging the body of the conquered on a wall was a show of disdain toward one's enemy. In this case it was a demonstration of the Philistines' total contempt for the Israelites. ***Inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead:*** When those whom Saul had initially saved in his early years (11:1-5) heard of the desecration of Saul and his sons, they secretly came at night and burned the bodies. A few years later, the bones of Saul and his sons were buried in a family tomb in Zelah (2 Sm 21:12-14). The end of Saul's kingship had come to a tragic end because he left the direction of God through His word and followed after mediums and soothsayers. Nevertheless, because of the respect some had for the dignity of a king, there was this secret burial for him and his sons.

2 Samuel

WRITER

It is possible that Nathan, the prophet, or Gad, the seer, wrote this book (See 1 Ch 29:29,30). The writer referred to other writings that were not a part of the Bible, such as the Book of Jasher (2 Sm 1:18) and the Chronicles of King David (1 Ch 27:24). These two records of the events in the history of Israel have been lost. They were not inspired books because they were not accepted by the Jews as inspired Chronicles of the kings of Israel. They were simply records that the Israelites made of their kings.

DATE

The history of 2 Samuel covers the period of the 40-year reign of King David, which is from about 1055 to 1015 B.C. It was a period of struggle as the kingdom had transition from the reign of Saul, to the end of the reign of David. This books brings us to the date of the reign of Solomon.

BOOK

The books of 1 & 2 Samuel were originally one book in the Jewish canon of Scriptures. The events at the end of 1 Samuel, therefore, continue with the events of 2 Samuel 1. The historical events from 1 Samuel 31 to the end of 2 Samuel are parallel with 1 Chronicles 10 – 29. 2 Samuel continues the theme of how God preserved the seedline nation of Israel, and in particular, the seed of David through whom He would bring the Messiah into the world (See comments ch 7). David was a man after God's own heart until the heart of God was revealed in Jesus.

Reign Of David Over Judah
(1:1 – 4:12)

Outline: (1) David mourns Saul and Jonathan (1:1-27), (2) David crowned as king (2:1-4), (3) David's message of appreciation (2:5-32), (4) Early beginnings in reign (3:1-5), (5) The death of Abner (3:6-39), (6) Assassination of Ishbosheth (4:1-12)

Chapter 1
DAVID MOURNS SAUL & JONATHAN

1:1-10 ***Clothes torn ... dust on head:*** These were the traditional signs of one in mourning. The story that is told here by the young Amalekite is different than the account given in 1 Samuel 31:4-6. We would suppose that this young man changed some of the details of the events simply for the purpose of receiving money for his report. ***I stood over him and slew him:*** It could be that when Saul committed suicide that he did not instantly die from his self-inflicted wound. When the Amalekite passed by, Saul asked that he slay him. Whatever the case, the Amalekite was surely seeking a reward for the news that he brought to David of his killing Saul.

1:11-16 The response of David to the death of Saul and Jonathan was remorse over the fact that an anointed king of Israel had been slain by uncircumcised hands. David's grief was compounded by the death of his dear friend, Jonathan. ***A stranger, an Amalekite:*** He was an alien residing in Israelite territory. Since he showed little respect or concern for the death of Saul, we would assume that he was not a true convert to the God of Israel. If he were a true believer, he would have been afraid, as Saul's armorbearer, to strike God's anointed (1 Sm 31:4). Because he felt no guilt in striking the anointed of God, David immediately ordered the execution of one who showed no respect for God's anointed. Since God had before ordered the death of all Amalekites, we would presume that this command was still on the mind of David.

1:17-27 ***Book of Jasher:*** This was probably an Israelite record of poems and eulogies of the heroes of Israel. It was not an inspired record (Ja 10:12,13). No portion of this book has survived history, for the only record of its existence is mentioned here in the Bible. David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan is in beautiful Hebrew poetry. In the composition of such psalms, David became known as the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (23:1). In this eulogy David expressed his sincere grief over the death of Saul and Jonathan. He exalted the splendor of Israel as the work of God. ***Gath ... Ashkelon:*** These were the two principal cities of the Philistines that here stand for the entire country of Philistia. ***Gilboa:*** This was where Israel was defeated and both Saul and Jonathan killed. David concluded the psalm with a special tribute to his friend, Jonathan. ***Saul and Jonathan were loved:*** The nature of this psalm reveals the character of David. He was a person with genuine feelings that he could express in beautifully written Hebrew poetry. We would assume that he would have rejoiced over the death of Saul, who had denied him his kingship and who pursued him as a fugitive from justice. But this was not the case. Though Saul had mistreated David throughout most of his life, David was not bitter. His words in this psalm express the nature of one who had within his heart the forgiveness of God.

Chapter 2
DAVID CROWNED AS KING

2:1-4 ***Anointed David king:*** David had already been anointed by Samuel. However, in this case, he was anointed by the people, and thus recognized as the rightful reigning king of Israel. The shepherd boy who killed the giant had finally arrived at the fulfillment of his destiny as the anointed king of Israel. One of his first acts was to show appreciation to those who had honored the anointed King Saul. The people of Jabesh Gilead had shown respect to the body of Saul by caring for it after it had been desecrated by the Philistines.

DAVID'S MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION

2:5-11 ***Abner ... took Ishbosheth:*** Now that the theocracy of Israel had been set aside because Israel wanted a king to reign over them, history was changed. As in this case, men in Israel began anointing their own kings, ignoring the fact that God only would anoint the rightful kings of Israel. But Abner circumvents the will of God by personally anointing Ishbosheth (or, "*Ish-Baal*") as a king (1 Ch 8:33; 9:39). ***Over all Israel:*** It is probable that Ishbosheth was a figurehead king over all Israel who reigned from Mahanaim. He was never a God-anointed king, and thus any rule he had was only from the strength of those who were still aligned with the remnants of Saul's people. David continued to remain in Hebron for five and a half years after the death of Ishbosheth. He then moved to Jerusalem and centralized his government and the faith of Israel in the city of Jerusalem.

2:12-23 After establishing Ishbosheth as a king, Abner, Saul's former captain, took offensive action against Joab, the captain of David's army. ***Play before us:*** Twelve soldiers were chosen who would engage in combat against one another. The victors would determine which army would be considered victorious. The outcome of this skirmish was that all the young soldiers killed one another, and thus there was a draw. The result was a fierce battle between the army of Abner and the army of Joab. The battle set the stage for Joab, David's nephew (1 Ch 2:15,16), to develop a feud with Abner. Joab had two brothers in David's army, Abishai (1 Sm 26:6) and Asahel. In the battle, Asahel ran after Abner. Abner, the more experienced soldier, killed Asahel. The death of Asahel at the hand of Abner would later lead to Abner's own death by Joab who would take his revenge out on Abner for the killing of his brother.

2:24-32 Though the soldiers of Joab had regrouped to continue the battle, Abner appealed to Joab for a truce. Joab agreed, lest many more die uselessly in this conflict between Israelites. It was at this time in history that Israelites began conflicts with one another, instead of with the remaining Canaanites that they were to drive from the land. The conflicts that they had with one another were centered around power, thus proving that their desire for a king on earth was a rejection of God ruling directly over them from heaven. ***Unless you had spoken:*** Joab could have meant that if Abner had spoken earlier the battle would never have occurred, and subsequently many lives would have been spared. Joab then took Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father, but he never

forgot what Abner had done. Joab would eventually get his revenge.

Chapter 3
EARLY BEGINNINGS IN REIGN

3:1-5 ***A long war:*** With the rise of the monarchy, those who sought power within Israel instigated internal conflicts among the Israelites. These initial conflicts were the beginning of the end of Israel as the people changed their focus from God as their king to politics on earth between allegiances to kings. In the case of the conflicts between those who maintained their allegiance to Ishbosheth, and those who accepted the kingship of David, David became stronger as the conflicts continued. ***Chileab:*** Or, Daniel (1 Ch 3:1). One of the vices of David was his many wives, which was not uncommon among those of his day. From his wives he had many children (See 1 Ch 3:5-9). However, from his many wives were also many problems that developed out of such polygamist relationships.

THE DEATH OF ABNER

3:6-16 ***Abner made himself strong:*** Abner was looking out for himself by strengthening himself with those who had formerly given their allegiance to Saul. Since the power behind the reign of Ishbosheth was based on Abner, then the reign of Ishbosheth was being weakened as Abner grew in strength. This could possibly have been the scheme of Abner to make himself king. ***Abner was very angry:*** He was angry that Ishbosheth had accused him of having a sexual relationship with one of Saul's concubines. Such would have meant that Abner was possibly making plans to seize the throne. In his anger, Abner threatened to give the throne to David, which threat silenced Ishbosheth. If Abner did such, then all Israel would be under the reign of David. This is exactly what Abner did. ***Abner sent messengers to David:*** It seems that Abner wasted no time in carrying out his plan to shift power from Ishbosheth to David. ***Michal, Saul's daughter:*** In order to have his claim to the throne strengthened, David certainly realized that having Saul's daughter as his wife was politically correct in order to gain the favor of those who were Saul's former followers. ***Weeping behind her:*** It may have been that Michal had lost her love for David. David's call for Michal was not to have her once again at his side, but to bring under his reign those who formerly gave allegiance to Saul. Michal's husband fell victim to a political move on the part of David.

3:17-21 Abner's intentions were noble. He knew that there was no future in the kingship of Ishbosheth, who was weak in character. Only in David did Abner realize that Israel would be delivered from the Philistines. He also knew that David was anointed by God, whereas he had made Ishbosheth a king. In all this political maneuvering, Abner even approached Saul's former tribe, the Benjamites, in order to convince them that David must now reign over all Israel.

3:22-30 ***Abner ... came to deceive you:*** These words of Joab came from the heart of one who wanted revenge for the death of Asahel who had been killed by Abner (2:18-23). After expressing his outrage with David, Joab, with Abishai, pursued Abner and murdered him for killing their brother. When David heard of the murder, he proclaimed himself guiltless. At the same time he pronounced judgment on the house of Joab for his sinful deed in killing an innocent man. ***Issue ... leper ... leans on a staff ... falls on the sword ... lacks bread:*** This curse was certainly a pronouncement of some very deplorable things that would happen to the descendants of Joab. There would always be someone in Joab's descendants who would have running sores. There would always be those with hemorrhages or leprosy, and those who would commit suicide or die of starvation. David's pronouncement was a prophecy from God. David expressed the feelings of God against such treachery that was carried out against Abner, though he was sincere in his efforts to bring all Israel under the reign of David.

3:31-39 Because Abner had previously shown great loyalty to God's anointed, Saul, David felt obligated to show respect to Saul by mourning the death of Abner. David's action in reference to the death of Abner signaled to the rest of Israel that he had nothing to do with his death. David did not want Israel to believe that he as a king would act in such a treacherous manner toward others. ***Too hard for me:*** David was not of the same character as Joab and Abishai. He was not one who sought vengeance or dealt treacherously with others. On the contrary, he was one of mercy and forgiveness. He illustrated the heart of God to all people. In his dealings with himself and others, he truly was one after God's own heart.

Chapter 4
ASSASSINATION OF ISHBOSHETH

4:1-3 ***His hands were feeble:*** Ishbosheth knew that his days were numbered. Since his reign rested on the strength of Abner, he knew that with Abner gone, so was he and his reign. ***Until this day:*** This statement indicates that the writing of the book of 2 Samuel occurred sometime before the Assyrian (722/21) and Babylonian (586) captivities.

4:4-8 ***Mephibosheth:*** Verse 4 is parenthetical in describing the fate of Mephibosheth, the only surviving heir of Saul's family. ***Smote ... slew ... beheaded:*** Treachery was again involved in the death of a king who would reign in Israel. In bringing the head of Ishbosheth, Rechab and Baanah presumed that they would receive a reward for killing a rival of David.

4:9-12 David's reaction to the murder of Ishbosheth was swift. He detested such murderous schemes by wicked men who presumed to gain political favor by their wicked deeds. The execution of Rechab and Baanah sent a signal to all Israel that under no circumstances would men of honor be murdered by treacherous men (See 1:14-16). Gaining the favor of David would not come by schemes of evil behavior.

Reign Of David Over All Israel
(5:1 – 10:19)

Outline: (1) Crowning of David (5:1-5), (2) Jerusalem as the capital (5:6-16), (3) Defeat of the Philistines (5:17-25), (4) The ark moved to Jerusalem (6:1-23), (5) David's desire to build a temple (7:1-3), (6) Prophecy concerning David's house (7:4-17), (7) Prayer of thanksgiving (7:18-29), (8) Expansion of David's reign (8:1-18),

(9) Mercy to Mephibosheth (9:1-13), (10) Defeat of Ammon and Syria (10:1-19)

Chapter 5
CROWNING OF DAVID

5:1-5 ***Your bone and your flesh:*** This indicated the giving of allegiance to David by offering the service of one's family and nationality. Credit must be given to Abner for initiating this allegiance when he turned from Ishbosheth and brought all Israel to David. ***A covenant:*** David made an agreement with the people that he would do as they asked. Covenants were usually sealed with a sacrifice that was followed by a celebration feast between the parties who made the covenant. We would assume, therefore, that at this time there was great joy as David began his uncontested reign over Israel at the age of 30, the normal age at which a Levite priest assumed his duties.

JERUSALEM AS THE CAPITAL

5:6-10 It was at this time that David made a choice to centralize his government. He moved from Hebron to Jerusalem from where he functioned as king. Hebron, where he was at the time all Israel gave allegiance to his kingship, was too far south in Palestine. Jerusalem, or Jebus, was more toward the north. As a capital, it would be closer to the northern tribes, though it was still in the territory of Judah. The Jebusites, a remnant people of the Canaanites, still dwelt in the city. They were arrogant about their possession of this naturally fortified city on a plateau. ***Watercourse:*** It is not known exactly what the watercourse was. This could possibly have been a water drain, or gutter, from which sewer and water flowed from the city. Some have suggested that reference was to a tunnel that led from a water source outside the walls into the city (Compare 1 Ch 11:4-7). Whatever the case, it was an unguarded entrance into the city. ***Zion:*** This familiar Old Testament reference is first mentioned here in the Bible. This was the hill upon which the fortified Jebusite city was located. ***City of David:*** This was another name by which Jerusalem became known. In the history of Israel this name became a principal name by which Jerusalem was also known. ***Millo:*** This term probably referred to the fortifications of the city of David. Zion, the city of David, and Millo became common references to Jerusalem throughout Hebrew history, and in prophecy became metaphors that signified God's future work with Israel.

5:11-16 Hiram, the king of Tyre, became a strong supporter of David (See 1 Kg 5:1). His allegiance to David was put into practice by his help of David to build a royal house in Jerusalem. ***His people Israel's sake:*** David understood that he was made king of Israel by God in order to preserve Israel. After Saul morally and emotionally digressed into sin in his later years, David assumed his responsibility to be a spiritual leader for Israel. He had a great sense of destiny, which destiny was determined by God for the sake of Israel. David knew that he was God's man on behalf of Israel, and thus sought in his life to assume the responsibility that came with being a God-anointed king.

DEFEAT OF THE PHILISTINES

5:17-21 As long as Israel was divided, the Israelites were not a threat to the Philistines. But with the final coronation of David, and the establishment of Jerusalem as the political and military capital of Israel, the Philistines moved to remove this threat. They saw Israel no longer as a divided and dispersed culture of farmers, but a significant military power that was now centered around David. ***Valley of Rephaim:*** This was the valley of the giants (Ja 15:8) that was just south of the city of Jerusalem. It is the valley of Hinnom. ***Breakthrough of waters:*** We do not fully understand the movement of David's men in this battle. However, it seems that David received advance notice of the intentions of the Philistines. He quickly took his army down to the "stronghold" (Adullam), and then surprised the Philistines with a swift attack from the east as they were approaching Jerusalem from the south.

5:22-25 Though defeated on their initial approach to Jerusalem, the Philistines regrouped in order to make another assault on the city. By the instructions of God who assumed the leadership of David's army, David was instructed to circle behind the Philistine army for his final blow. From His vantage point, the omnipresent God could "see" the location of the Philistines. ***Geba:*** This was a small city near Jerusalem. ***Gazer:*** Or, Gezer, which was far to the northwest of Jerusalem (See 1 Ch 14:8-17). The result of this victory was that the fear of David was in the hearts of the nations. If the warlike Philistines could not defeat David, then surely there was no other army who could do better in a military confrontation with Israel.

Chapter 6
THE ARK MOVED TO JERUSALEM

6:1-5 ***Baale:*** This would be Kirjath Jearim or Baalah (1 Ch 13:6). ***The ark of God:*** The ark had been in Kirjath Jearim for 70 years. David's plan at this time was not only to make Jerusalem the political and military capital of Israel, but also the religious capital. His first move was to make Jerusalem the focus of Israel's faith by bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem. He would later solidify this focus by building a temple in Jerusalem. All these efforts were to consolidate the unity of Israel around the city of Jerusalem. Of course all these efforts were contrary to God's original plan for Israel, but in a state of apostasy, God allowed such arrangements in order to preserve Israel in their rejection of the theocracy by which the Israelites were originally meant to be governed. God intended that a theocracy prevail in Israel with Him reigning over them from heaven. In conjunction with this rule, no one tribe was to lay claim to the tabernacle in their particular territory. ***On a new cart:*** This movement of the ark was contrary to the manner by which the ark was always to be moved. It was to be borne on the shoulders of the priests. ***Played before the Lord:*** Though there was great joy on the occasion of moving the ark, no one thought that God's law was being violated, which violation needed strong discipline from the Lord. At this time in the history of Israel, if David wanted to restore Israel to the will of God, then God had to unleash drastic measures in

order to strike fear in the hearts of everyone. As God did at the beginning in the formation of the Israelite nation, in this new beginning, punishment for the violation of law had to be administered immediately and openly.

6:6-11 ***Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark:*** A second violation of the law of God is here recorded. Not only was the ark being improperly moved, someone other than a Levitical priest touched the ark (Ex 25:14,15; Nm 4:15,20; 7:9). Uzzah was immediately struck dead because he put forth his hand and touched the ark (1 Ch 13:10). It may have been that because the ark was in the house of Abinadab that it had become a common thing. On this occasion it was treated as such in both transportation and handling. If Israel was to be religiously restored in the early days of David's reign, then the death of Uzzah certainly struck fear in the hearts of the people. In a real and demonstrated manner, the entire nation was reminded that God was still present among them. ***How will the ark ... come to me:*** It could have been that even David was ignorant concerning the correct manner by which the ark was to be moved. The Levites possibly failed to instruct the people concerning these matters, for clear instructions were given in the written law of God, the Torah. ***Blessed the house of Obededom:*** Because it is here mentioned that this house was blessed, but not the house of Abinadab, may indicate that as a Levitical priest, Obededom treated the ark with the respect that it deserved in representing the presence of God. It is probable that Abinadab knew nothing of Levitical rules by which the ark was to be handled or moved. He thus did not reap the reward of its being in the presence of his house.

6:12-15 (1 Ch 15:1 – 16:43) ***He sacrificed oxen:*** David took no chances with the movement of the ark to Jerusalem on this occasion. Not only was it properly carried on the shoulders of the priests, David sacrificed oxen all the way to Jerusalem. ***Danced before the Lord:*** This was a religious ceremony in which much joy was expressed for the arrival of the ark.

6:16-19 ***Michal:*** It seems that Michal had no pleasure in celebrating the arrival of the ark. Because her heart was far from God's work, she was looking on the proceedings with disgust and not with joy. She was sarcastic in her remarks to David concerning his behavior (vs 20). ***Midst of the tabernacle:*** This would not have been the original tabernacle (tent) that Israel had made at the foot of Mt. Sinai, for this event took place about 400 years after the building of the first tabernacle (1 Ch 17:4-6). However, David did make a tent for the dwelling place of the ark. Unfortunately, he and the others had forgotten that the tabernacle and ark were to be moved regularly throughout the territories of Israel in order that no one be continually too far from it for the annual sacrifices. God's original plan for the continual movement of the tabernacle and ark was eventually ignored when David decided to build a permanent house for the ark in Jerusalem. The Levites had forgotten to implement the reconstruction of the tabernacle. Instructions on how to do such were given in great detail in the law, which instructions were to be used throughout the history of Israel to continually refurbish or reconstruct the tent structure of the tabernacle.

6:20-23 Michal resented David parading himself before the people. David had exchanged his royal clothing for the linen ephod of a priest. In doing such, he mingled with the common people in the celebration to bring the ark into Jerusalem. ***Before the Lord:*** What David did was not for his own pleasure, or for the pretense of gaining the favor of the people. He was totally convicted and moved in his behavior to show glory to God. ***Chose me before your father:*** This statement reveals that Michal probably resented David's assumption of his kingship. She could have been bitter over the rejection of her father, Saul, as king of Israel. She could also have resented David for taking her away from her husband. Michal's punishment for her resentful heart was the shame of being barren for the rest of her life (See 1 Sm 1:5).

Chapter 7
DAVID'S DESIRE TO BUILD A TEMPLE

The events recorded in chapters 7 and 8 are parallel with 1 Chronicles 17 & 18. The events here are not in chronological order, but are written in reference to a logical succession of events after the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem. We must understand that what follows is David's efforts to centralize government and religion in Jerusalem. Though contrary to the original plan of God, we must understand that God was allowing such to happen. He accommodated Israel's desire to have a king over them as the nations around them. Israel's king, therefore, was a concession that was given by God. Now in the construction of a temple, He was accommodating David's desire to construct a temple as the religions around Israel who had done the same for their gods. God conceded to David's desire, but at the same time He knew that the permanent location of the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem would marginalize the northern tribes. They would be marginalized to the point that Jeroboam would later set up altars in the northern kingdom so that the people would not have to go to Jerusalem to appear before the Lord. Nevertheless, God often gives concessions that divert from His original plans, but wants men to understand that they will eventually pay the price for any deviations.

7:1-3 ***Dwells within curtains:*** This was what God originally intended. Since the construction of the "curtains" (the tabernacle) 400 years before, God intended that there be a continual movement of the tabernacle among the tribal territories in order that Israel not do what David here intends to do. At the time God gave the law on Mt. Sinai, He knew that Israel would eventually reject His theocratic rule over them and cry for a king. When Saul was anointed king of Israel, the theocracy ended. God had given instructions in the law concerning the king that they would have rule over them. However, in reference to the tabernacle, there were no alternative plans given for a permanent facility as the temple. The tabernacle, and the continual refurbishing of it, was to continue throughout their history (1 Ch 17:4-6). The reason for this was obvious. Jesus referred to the reason in John 4, that God is not located in a physical structure, neither is He the God of Israel alone. He is worshiped in all places in all the world (Jn 4:21-24). Israel could not claim God for themselves by the construction of a temple. No one tribe of Israel could take ownership of the ark.

Nevertheless, these things happened in Israel, which things eventually aided in Israel's division and apostasy from God. ***The Lord is with you:*** It was not that God had changed His original plan. He only conceded to what David desired. The temple was David's desire, not God's original plan. Though God knew where the kings of Israel would lead Israel, He still sanctioned their desire for kings on earth over Israel. God did the same thing in reference to the building of the temple. He knew that the centralization of the ark of the covenant in the temple would lead to the division of the tribes. Nevertheless, He allowed their desires to be carried out in order that we learn from their mistakes (See comments Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11).

PROPHECY CONCERNING DAVID'S HOUSE

7:4-11 ***I have walked in a tent:*** This, and the accompanying statements, make it very clear that God here chided David in his plan to build a temple. God stated that He had "walked" in a tent for over 400 years with Israel (1 Ch 17:4-6). Why, He reasoned through Nathan to David, should a house of cedar be built for Him? He reasoned that if He could walk in a tent for over 400 years, then why could He not continue to do so in the future? These challenges by God made it very clear that the eventual construction of the temple in Solomon's day was never in the plan of God. Israel was to remain with the tabernacle structure throughout their history. Once a tabernacle was worn out, they were to construct another. For this reason intricate details were given for the structure in the law. The tabernacle was never meant to be a blueprint for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. ***He will make you a house:*** This statement is made in the context of building "houses." In other words, God was saying, "Now that we are on the subject of 'houses,' let Me tell you about the real spiritual house that I am building."

7:12-17 ***Your seed after you:*** Here is a major prophecy surrounding the throne of David, which throne represented the authority of God on earth. God promised David that He would set up his seed after him and establish his kingdom (vs 12). There are actually two promises made in this context. God would set up David's descendants upon his throne. The singular pronoun "his" refers us to an individual, though there is a secondary fulfillment of the prophecy that referred to the Messiah. The first individual to sit on David's throne would be Solomon, but reference was also to the Messiah who would come in the future. ***Build a house for My name:*** In His promise to David, God described what He would do through this One whom He would eventually raise up after David. He would build a house and establish a kingdom (vs 13). The house of David and the kingdom would be sure (forever) (vs 16). There are four key thoughts to this prophecy and promise to David: (1) One from David's seed would sit upon his throne. (2) The One who would sit on the throne of David would build a house for the Lord. (3) David's house would have an everlasting reign. (4) The throne and kingdom would be made certain forever. 2 Samuel 7 is thus a prophecy concerning the immediate reign of Solomon who would sit on David's throne after David. In the context, however, God was addressing David concerning the "One" who would far into the future sit on his throne and rule after him. The immediate fulfillment of the prophecy refers to Solomon. However, even David knew that reference was beyond his heirs, for David referred to the fulfillment of the prophecy as a "great while to come" (vs 19; compare the parallel promise of Ps 89:34-37). The first fulfillment of these prophecies was found in the reign of Solomon. Solomon, David's son, did reign upon David's throne. Solomon did build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem. Solomon's reign was secure in the sense of being "forever." (The use of the word "forever" is used in this context as in many other contexts to refer to God firmly establishing His reign. The reign would not be terminated until its intended time of duration had been completed.) Solomon's personal reign ceased when he died. The Davidic kings on earth did eventually cease. The nation of Israel eventually came to an end. When Israel disobeyed the will of God, she was taken from Palestine into both Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. With the final captivity of 586 B.C., the earthly reign of kings upon David's throne in Jerusalem was terminated. Jeremiah wrote of this in Jeremiah 22:30 concerning the reign of Jehoiachin (Coniah), the last earthly king of the Davidic line to reign on earth (See comments Jr 22:30). The final fulfillment of all that was stated in 2 Samuel 7 eventually came to pass by the time of the events that transpired in Acts 2. In Acts 2 Peter stated that David was a prophet and that he knew what God had sworn to him (At 2:30). This one inspired statement of Peter clearly affirms that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promises to David, that He would set One upon his throne. Peter also stated that David did not ascend to heaven. However, David did prophesy of Jesus by saying, *"The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand"* (At 2:34; see Ps 110:1). Jesus ascended to the right hand of God in order to receive sovereign rule. He is there now ruling all nations by the authority that the Father gave to Him when He was seated at His right hand (Ep 1:20-22). Therefore, God kept His oath to David that He swore in 2 Samuel 7. He raised Jesus up to seat Him at His right hand. Every statement of 2 Samuel 7 was finally fulfilled in Christ. Jesus was of the seed of David. Jesus established His church, which is the house of God. The kingdom reign of Jesus is everlasting in the sense of being sure and certain, and will continue until Jesus returns all authority to God (1 Co 15:26-28). Thus His kingdom reign would last throughout its intended time of duration. Once it had completed its purpose, then kingdom reign was returned to the Father.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

7:18-29 ***Who am I:*** These words of David indicate the fact that he fully understood the magnitude of the prophecy concerning his house. Though he did not understand that to which reference was made concerning the Messiah to come, he did understand that God was going to do a great work through his lineage to accomplish something wonderful. David understood that these things were beyond the knowledge of men (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). For this reason he was exceedingly thankful to God for using him and his lineage to ac-

complish something wonderful in the future history of Israel. When one comprehends the spiritual legacy that he leaves to others, with great sobriety he will focus on his own spiritual development and faithfulness to God.

Chapter 8
EXPANSION OF DAVID'S REIGN

8:1-14 The events of chapters 8 – 10 transpired over a period of several years. In order to establish his kingdom reign, David had to defeat all the enemies of Israel who posed a threat to her security. The first threat was the Philistines who had been a thorn in the flesh to Israel since Israel's occupation of Palestine. Starting with the Philistines, David's goal was to rid Palestine of all the enemies of Israel, or at least to bring them into subjection. Through all these conquests, Israel was greatly enriched with the spoil that came from the many victories. David impoverished the nations while enriching Israel.

8:15-18 ***Judgment and justice:*** Contrary to the latter years of Saul, David dealt fairly with the people. He had the people at heart, and not his own kingship. Good heads of state function in this manner. They do not see their power as an opportunity to use the people to enrich themselves, but as an occasion to serve the people. Government must always be for the people, lest the officials of government use the people for their own aggrandizement.

Chapter 9
MERCY TO MEPHIBOSHETH

9:1-13 ***Mephibosheth:*** He was probably about five years old when Saul and Jonathan were killed (4:4). This event took place after David had conquered the enemies of Israel and was settling down in his reign over Israel. It was a time when he remembered his covenant with Jonathan, and thus sought for anyone who might be an heir of Jonathan through whom he could preserve Jonathan's posterity. ***Fell on his face:*** Mephibosheth was apprehensive about the summons of the king, for the traditional practice was that heirs to kingship were eliminated. ***A dead dog as I am:*** Mephibosheth was not summoned to be killed, but to be rewarded in order that the name of Jonathan continue in Israel. Mephibosheth thus expressed his humble gratitude as one who felt that he did not deserve such mercy from the king. Because Mephibosheth was handicapped, Ziba was instructed to continue administering the property of Mephibosheth. However, he was to bring the produce of the fields to Mephibosheth. All that was the possession of Jonathan was to be returned to Mephibosheth.

Chapter 10
DEFEAT OF AMMON & SYRIA

10:1-5 See 1 Ch 19:1-19. The war to which reference was made in 8:12 is here explained. ***Shave ... their beards:*** Shaving any part of the beards of an Israelite was a humiliating gesture. The humiliation was intensified by cutting off half of their garments so they would be exposed. In their actions, Hanun was showing contempt for David. ***Wait in Jericho:*** In order to preserve their dignity, David allowed the men to live in obscurity until their beards grew back.

10:6-8 Hanun knew that what he did to the messengers of David would stir up a war with Israel. They thus prepared for David's retaliation.

10:9-14 The battle with the coalition of Ammon and Syria took place at the gate of Ammon, or Rabbah. Joab, with his brother, Abishai, led a united effort of Israelites with the belief that God was working for them against those who had stirred up an unjustified war. ***Joab returned:*** We do not know why Joab terminated the battle and returned to Jerusalem. It could have been that winter was coming and he did not want to conduct an extended battle against Rabbah in the winter, for the winter was not the season when nations went out to battle with one another.

10:15-19 ***Hadarezer:*** Or, Hadadezer (8:3). This was Syria's most powerful leader under which the nation rallied again against Israel. However, David personally led this attack against the Syrians. He defeated them and subsequently subjected them to Israel to pay tribute.

David's Fall And Discipline
(11:1 – 18:33)

Outline: (1) Sin with Bathsheba (11:1 – 12:31), (2) Problems in David's house (13:1 – 14:33), (3) Absalom's rebellion (15:1 – 18:33)

Chapter 11
SIN WITH BATHSHEBA

11:1-5 Since Israel had subjected Syria, it was now time to subject Ammon. ***David stayed at Jerusalem:*** At a time when the king of Israel should have been with his men at the front of the attack against Ammon, he stayed home. We are not told why David stayed in Jerusalem, but his idleness in Jerusalem led to his temptation and fall with Bathsheba. ***A woman washing herself:*** Bathsheba was not cautious with her bathing, and David was in a position where he could see her. The encounter led to dire consequences as this story unfolded. ***The wife of Uriah:*** David fully knew that Bathsheba was a married woman when he allowed his lusts to be fulfilled in sin (See comments Js 1:14,15). ***Hittite:*** Uriah was a prominent soldier in David's army. He was not an Israelite, but we would suppose that he was a proselyte to the God of Israel. ***Purified from her uncleanness:*** Compare Lv 15:19-30.

11:6-13 In this case one sin led to another as David sought to cover up his adultery. ***Uriah slept at the door:*** There is a contrast between the honor by which Uriah conducted himself during this event, and the depths to which sin took David. As a leader in the army of Israel, Uriah did not take advantage of his privilege of being summoned by the king to be in the comfort of his wife. At the same time, David should have been with his men, and outside the comfort of his own wives. Regardless of David's persistent efforts to have Uriah sleep with his wife, Uriah's dedication to his fellow soldiers was stronger. No effort on David's part was successful in having Uriah sleep with his wife in order that a deception could be stated that the conceived infant in the womb of Bathsheba was the result of Uriah's seed. Uriah's honor was greater than the twisted advice of a king who was following after his own lusts.

11:14-21 David's efforts to sin by deception now led to a plan for taking a life. The death of Uriah was to be indirect from David. It was David's scheme to have Uriah killed in the heat of a foolish move in battle. Though killed by an enemy in battle, God still held him accountable for the death of Uriah. Joab probably knew of the cover up scheme when he received the letter. To protect the reputation of David, he followed the unwise order to move valiant men close to the wall of the city. In the move, Uriah and others were killed. ***There fell some of ... the servants of David:*** David's cover up for his own sin led to the death of more people than Uriah. Innocent people often die when kings go wrong.

11:22-27 Hearing the news of Uriah's death brought relief to David, for he thought that the cover up scheme had worked, and now he could take Bathsheba to be his wife. By this time we assume that Bathsheba was at least one month into pregnancy. ***Mourned for her husband:*** The traditional time of mourning was seven days. ***She became his wife:*** It may have been that this was the original intention of Bathsheba, for she did bathe in a place where she could be seen by David. She willingly came to David, either out of fear of the king or because she was ambitious to become the king's wife. We are not told all the story, but she did finally become one of the wives of the king. ***Displeased the Lord:*** When the leader of God's people morally falls, then the effects of his sins are greater than the ones who follow his sins. The people follow the morals of their leaders. In this case, David's sin was tragic for national morality, and thus specific measures were taken by God to rectify the problem by bringing direct judgment upon David.

Chapter 12

12:1-6 ***The Lord sent Nathan:*** We would suppose that Nathan had some apprehension about going to the king with a message of condemnation. Nevertheless, as true prophets of God, he had no choice but to speak the word of God. In this case, Nathan gave a parable that would arouse the king to administer justice to himself by pronouncing judgment on one who committed a ruthless action against his fellow man. The sin committed in the parable was exemplified by the fact that it was a sin of the rich against the poor. David's reaction to the deed of the ruthless rich man was immediate and according to justice. Punishment by death was to be handed out, as well as restitution made to the poor man (See Ex 22:1).

12:7-12 ***You are the man:*** We assume that this statement of Nathan stunned David. ***I would moreover have given you much more:*** It seems that David took God's blessings for granted. In a moment of lust, David had forgotten that his kingship and what he had, even his own life, was the result of God's grace and mercy in his life. And yet, David's moment of ingratitude and lust led him to fulfill his lusts and kill an innocent man and some of his companions. The point is that the righteous must never arrogantly assume that where they are and what they have is by their own power. What they have and who they are does not give them the right to follow after their lusts into sin. When the righteous lose sight of the work of God in their lives, they often take credit for their accomplishments. In the bondage of their own self glory they often feel they have earned the right to sin. ***You have despised Me:*** As all sin, David's sin against Uriah was a sin against God. ***I will take your wives:*** David took the wife of another, and thus God would take all his wives. ***Secretly:*** His efforts to conceal his sin would be punished by God's public judgment in a rebellion that would come from within his own family. For a moment of sin to gratify the lusts of the flesh, David would reap grief for the rest of his life. There is a high price to be paid for sin (See comments Ps 51).

12:13,14 ***I have sinned:*** David suddenly realized that though his sin was hidden from men, it was not hidden from God. At a time when he focused on things of this world, he forgot that he was naked before God. ***You will not die:*** David's own pronouncement of death to the ruthless rich man in Nathan's parable would now to be meted out on himself. Grace and mercy from God would prevail. David knew that if another had done what he did, he would be deserving of death. God's mercy toward David for his sin with Bathsheba would teach him to be merciful to others. Though David's actions presented an opportunity for the enemies of Israel to blaspheme the God of Israel, God accepted the blasphemy in order to spare the fallible king of Israel for the sake of preserving His people. David was the best God had at the time to preserve Israel. ***Blaspheme:*** They would assign the work of God in Israel to be the work of a god that Israel had created after her own imagination. Because of David's sin, they would proclaim that the God of Israel was no better than the gods of their own wicked beliefs and behavior. ***The child ... will surely die:*** Possibly more than a year had transpired between the time of David's adultery with Bathsheba and the time when Nathan came to David. Judgment in time for sin is often delayed, but it eventually comes. God's grace and mercy toward David would also cost the life of an innocent child. Justice was served by the death of the innocent. As in the case of Abraham being asked to offer his innocent son, Isaac, here again God seems to be preparing the minds of Israel for the offering of His own innocent Son on the cross for all our sins (See Gn 22).

12:15-23 ***Inquired of God for the child:*** This was a prayer that God would not answer. The death of the child was the judgment of God, and in this case, God would not change His judgment. ***Is the child dead:*** David perceived by the behavior of those around him that the child had died. When they informed him that he was dead, David washed himself and ate. His actions confused those of the court, for they presumed that he would mourn the death of the child. David's explanation revealed that he accepted the judgment of God, and thus prepared himself to move on. ***I will go to him:*** David understood that there was life after death, and in that life he would again be in the company of his child.

12:24-31 ***Solomon:*** Little did David know that God would bring forth from the womb of Bathsheba the most prominent king in the history of Israel. This would be the son through whom God would continue to fulfill the seedline promise that was initially stated in Genesis 3:15, and then to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. "Solomon," the name given by David, means

"peaceable." But the name given by God through Nathan was "Jedidiah," which means "beloved of the Lord." It seems that in God's punishment of David and Bathsheba through the death of their first son, there was a blessing from God in the birth of their second son, Solomon. All things work together for good to those who love the Lord (Rm 8:28). For this reason, the children of God must always be optimistic about the future. In the end, all things will work out for the good of the Christian.

Chapter 13
PROBLEMS IN DAVID'S HOUSE

13:1-6 God's curse of David's house, because of his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, began to immediately occur after the pronouncement of God. David began to reap what he had sown in that his household morally degenerated. The polygamous marriages in which he was involved began to bring forth the bitter fruit of his morally degenerate offspring. ***Absalom ... Tamar:*** These were sons of David through his wife, Maacah, whom he married during his years of flight from Saul (3:2,3). ***Amnon:*** Amnon was the half brother of Tamar. His marriage with Tamar would have been forbidden by the law (Lv 18:11). ***Pretended to be sick:*** Since he could not go to her, Amnon, on the advice of Jonadab, his cousin, schemed a plan to have Tamar sent to him.

13:7-14 ***Do not do this disgraceful thing:*** At least Tamar was morally responsible. Though incest was practiced among the nations around Israel, it was to be abhorred in Israel. Amnon had little moral discretion. ***Where will I take my name:*** When fornication occurs, someone is always shamed. Some life is changed forever. In this case, the selfish Amnon had no consideration for the one with whom he wanted to commit fornication. All that was on his mind was the fulfillment of his lusts of the flesh. ***He did not harken to her voice:*** He raped her, an act of the lowest and most vile nature of a degenerate man.

13:15-18 ***Amnon hated her exceedingly:*** The true character of a rapist was here manifested by Amnon whose uncontrollable passion turned to revulsion which manifested his vile character. When his uncontrollable passion was not rewarded with a favorable response from Tamar, his passion turned to hate.

13:19-22 ***Tamar remained desolate:*** Someone always pays the price for fornication. ***David ... was very angry:*** However, he took no action. He probably took no action because he recalled his own sin with Bathsheba. Nevertheless, his lack of action would eventually lead to more sorrow, for Absalom's vengeance on Amnon would cause David grief. Absalom himself would eventually lead a rebellion against David.

13:23-29 Amnon surely suspected that Absalom would do something to avenge the rape of his sister, Tamar. For this reason, Absalom waited two full years before he schemed his revenge. A festival was planned. Knowing that Amnon would be apprehensive about coming, Absalom also invited the king, whom he knew would not leave Jerusalem in order to attend. Nevertheless, the scheme worked. Amnon was deceived into believing that David would be present, and thus he decided to go to Absalom's festival. Amnon was subsequently murdered by the friends of Absalom. Since Absalom was the next oldest son of David, this put him first in line to be king after David. Absalom's murder of Amnon satisfied his revenge, as well as set him up to be the next king of Israel.

13:30-39 ***Talmai, king of Geshur:*** This king was the grandfather of Absalom (3:3). Geshur was far to the north of Jerusalem in Syria. It was here that Absalom waited until the time when David would be comforted concerning his act of revenge against Amnon. Since David mourned over Absalom, his forgiveness of Absalom was quicker than Absalom presumed. We would assume that in his heart David knew that Amnon received the judgment he deserved for his rape of Tamar.

Chapter 14

14:1-11 Joab, the captain of David's army, realized that David longed for Absalom. He thus recruited a woman of Tekoa to go to David with a parable about one brother murdering his other brother. The story was told to David in order to stimulate his sympathies for Absalom. As with the case when Nathan, the prophet, came before David with a story whereby David pronounced judgment on a ruthless rich man, in this case David also pronounced just judgment. The judgment that David pronounced was also unknowingly against himself. The story of the woman was a plea for God's mercy, and thus David responded that mercy should be extended in the case of the offending brother.

14:12-17 ***He devises means so that His banished ones not be expelled from Him:*** This is mercy and grace. The "banished ones" were banished by law, but not expelled because of grace. Grace is the impetus by which mercy sets aside the just punishment of law. However, this principle is not in reference to those who completely reject law, for in rebellion against law, one cannot live under grace. The banished one can be brought back only if he forsakes his rebellion. Otherwise, he must remain banished if he remains rebellious.

14:18-24 ***Bring the young man Absalom:*** David understood that someone else was behind the presentation of the woman. She confessed that it was Joab, and subsequently David commanded that Absalom should be brought again to Jerusalem. By this time in the life of Absalom, it seems that he had gained the favor of the people, but in particular, the favor of Joab. It may have been that David saw a spirit of conspiracy in Absalom that the others did not. But to honor the request of his nephew, Joab, David gave the order that Absalom could return. Joab would later regret that he encouraged David to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem. In fact, Joab would later kill Absalom for his rebellion. ***Let him not see my face:*** The condition for Absalom's return was that he was not to be brought into the king's court. He was to live in his own house apart from the royal family.

14:25-27 ***Hair of his head:*** The handsome appearance of Absalom is here recorded in order to help us understand why the people were so fickle in following him. It has been estimated that when his hair was annually cut, it weighed over

two kilograms. It is stated that even Absalom's daughter was very beautiful. In appearance, his family had a good physical presentation, which possibly aided in Absalom's conspiracy to gain the favor of the people.

14:28-33 Absalom's act of setting the field of Joab on fire revealed that he was somewhat unscrupulous and ungrateful in his dealings with others. At least in this act he proved that he was not one fit to be a king. Unfortunately, Joab had not at this time fully understood the ultimate goal of Absalom, that goal being a conspiracy against the reign of David.

Chapter 15
ABSALOM'S REBELLION

15:1-12 Nathan had prophesied that David would have troubles in his household. The next four chapters explain in detail the conspiracy of Absalom in detail in order to reveal the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy. ***Absalom stole the hearts of the men:*** There was no question concerning the motives of Absalom. He began his political campaign in order to gain the favor of the people, specifically those who were the leaders. He presented himself as a leader, and then campaigned for the allegiance of those he planned to use in his rebellion against the reign of his father. The seriousness of his scheme was in the fact that he was campaigning against the anointed of God, and thus his plan was doomed from the beginning. He would receive no sympathy from God. He also manifested his true character, that it was the opposite of David's, since David would not lay his hand on God's anointed, Saul. But we must understand that Israel's character as a nation had now digressed to paying allegiance to kings on earth, not the King of heaven. Instead of considering God in this matter, Absalom considered only the allegiance of the people and his own selfish ambition. The people at this time in the history of Israel were concerned only for their leaders on earth, not the will of God. Throughout the remainder of Israel's history, this turn of the desires of the people from God to a king on earth would lead them further away from God, and eventually into captivity. It was for this reason that God did not plan for Israel to be ruled by a king on earth. ***Four years:*** There was an obvious scribal error of the date of 40 years in the *Textus Receptus* from which the KJV was translated. The Septuagint and Syriac versions have the correct reading of four years. ***He ... went to Hebron:*** The rebellion began in Hebron, from which city Absalom told messengers that they tell the leaders of Israel that his reign had already started from Hebron. Absalom assumed that Hebron would be the favored place from which to begin his reign, since it was from Hebron that David also began his reign (2:4; 5:3). Since Hebron was in the central region of the territory of Judah, he knew that he needed the allegiance of Judah before he could presume to reign over all Israel. ***The conspiracy was strong:*** We are not told why a great number of people followed Absalom. It may have been that David was such a man after God's own heart, that the people craved a king who was arrogant and pompous as the kings of the nations around Israel. Their desires may not have been fulfilled in the "sweet psalmist of Israel." While David believed that God would guard his reign in his later years, men thirsty for power found occasion to satisfy the political yearnings of the people. Absalom was politically correct in pleasing the desires of the people. He arrogantly presumed to be that which the people desired.

15:13-18 David was informed that the majority of Israel had given their allegiance to Absalom. Once informed, David again became a fugitive. We are not told why he chose to flee. But it could be that he submitted to the judgment of God that was pronounced by Nathan (See 12:10ff). ***Cherethites ... Pelethites ... Gittites:*** These were David's valiant men of war who had been with him in his former days as a fugitive from Saul (16:6; 20:7; 23:8).

15:19-23 ***Ittai:*** David did not want his men to again become fugitives with him. But this leader of the 600 loyal warriors of David pledged his life-or-death allegiance to David.

15:24-29 ***Ark of God:*** It could have been that here again the ark was being used as a fetish for the protection of those who had possession of it. But David said that the ark belonged in the tabernacle. David reassured Zadok and Abiathar that if God's favor was for him, he would again see the ark. He was more concerned that the will of God be carried out in his life than for any reassurance that would come from having possession of the ark.

15:30-37 Mt. of Olives is just east of the city of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley. David and his group made their way across the Kidron Valley to the Mt. of Olives. ***Ahithophel:*** The prayer of David that Ahithophel's counsel be turned into foolishness was eventually fulfilled. ***Hushai:*** Contrary to the treason of Ahithophel, Hushai came with great mourning concerning the conspiracy. David here commissioned him as a spy in the presence of those who would stand before Absalom.

Chapter 16

16:1-4 ***Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth:*** It seems that Ziba may have been scheming against Mephibosheth in order to gain the favor of David. He first brought David and his household donkeys on which to ride and food for his escape from Jerusalem. ***The house of Israel will restore to me the kingdom of my Father:*** These supposed words of Mephibosheth that were told to David by Ziba were a lie. Ziba seems to have been scheming for that which was granted to him by David, that is, the property of Mephibosheth.

16:5-14 Shimei was of the family of Saul. In this event Shimei vented his anger against David for the misfortunes that had befallen the house of Saul. Shimei expressed the feelings that were held by many people in Israel, for many were still loyal to Saul. It must be noted that these loyalties continued to prevail for many years after the death of Saul. One reason why God did not want Israel to have a king over them was because of this very point. When kings succeeded kings, loyalty to former kings would always hinder the work of the reigning king. ***This dead dog:*** Abishai wanted to render immediate punishment to Shimei. However, David still assumed that his misfortune was the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy, and thus he had to pay the price for the death of Uriah.

16:15-23 ***God save the king:*** These words of Hushai were

stated to Absalom in order that he might bring himself into the confidence of Absalom. In this conversation between Hushai and Absalom, Hushai was bringing himself into the confidence of the king in order to accomplish the downfall of Absalom. ***Go into your father's concubines:*** This advice of Ahithophel was for two purposes. First, going into the concubines of David in a public manner would be Absalom's signal to the people that he was assuming all that belonged to David. Second, the action would also show to the people that there would be no reconciliation in the future between himself and David.

Chapter 17

17:1-14 Ahithophel was too ambitious in his advice to Absalom. Because he was, Absalom wanted to get a second opinion from Hushai. This was the opportunity for Hushai to turn the advice of Ahithophel against Absalom. Hushai counselled that David's men were crafty at warfare, and thus would be expecting an attack from Absalom's men. If Absalom lost this battle, the people would turn against him. Hushai's advice was to wait until a great army could be gathered from all Israel in order to crush David and his men. Absalom took this advice, which advice led to his downfall.

17:15-23 The fact that the messengers to David were hidden by some of the Jerusalem residents reveals that not all in Jerusalem and the surrounding area had given allegiance to Absalom. What David needed was time to rally all those who had not followed in the rebellion. There were more who would rally around David than Absalom, and thus the delay was to the advantage of David. ***Hanged himself:*** The result of Ahithophel's betrayal of David was the same as Judas when he betrayed Jesus. Ahithophel realized that Hushai's advice would lead to the victory of David over Absalom, and thus he knew that David would punish him for his betrayal.

17:24-29 ***Mahanaim:*** Once the news of Absalom's rebellion reached the ears of the surrounding people who were loyal to David, a great number of people gathered to support David. David began to organize his men east of the Jordan for he knew that Absalom would soon follow with an attack.

Chapter 18

18:1-5 ***You will not go forth:*** This was a time when the cause of the nation was greater than the man who was the king. The people were certainly loyal to David. Their allegiance was to him as God's anointed king of the nation. They recognized that the rebellion of Absalom was not just against David, but against the God-anointed king and Israel as a nation. For this reason they did not want David to put his life in any danger, for if he died in battle as the anointed king of Israel, the people would conclude that God was no longer with David, as He was no longer with Saul when he was killed in battle. ***Deal gently with ... Absalom:*** The commanders of David's army knew that this was not a defensive battle against Absalom. It was a full offensive attack to preserve the kingdom reign of God's anointed and the nation of Israel. Knowing that his commanders would fight to crush totally Absalom's rebellion, David commanded that when the battle was won, that they should spare Absalom.

18:6-8 ***The forest devoured more people:*** We are not told if the 20,000 dead were the total casualties of both sides. But we would assume that the total was composed primarily of the men of Absalom because of this statement. In fear, Absalom's men fled, but were cornered by the ravines and gorges in the forest. We assume that many jumped or fell to their deaths.

18:9-18 When faced with death from the warriors of David, Absalom fled for his own life. Unfortunately, as his mule passed under a tree, Absalom's head was caught in the fork of a tree limb. A certain man found Absalom in this condition. But because he greatly respected the charge of David that no one harm Absalom, he left Absalom hanging there and reported the matter to Joab. Joab remembered that he had earlier given bad advice to David when Absalom had fled to the north after killing Amnon. He possibly did not want to make the same mistake by allowing Absalom to plan again for another insurrection. This time he wanted to rid Israel of one who had a rebellious spirit against the anointed of God.

18:19-33 The official result of the battle was initially sent to David through a Cushite. Following the sending of the Cushite, an unofficial report was sent through Ahimaaz. Since those with David saw one running alone, they presumed that it was a messenger, not a fugitive, for a fugitive would have been followed by others. It was Joab's purpose to send the Cushite first, but later send Ahimaaz who outran the Cushite. Ahimaaz arrived first, and gave the good news of the victory. However, David asked him to stand aside at the time the Cushite arrived. The Cushite gave the message that Absalom was dead. ***O my son Absalom:*** We would expect such a response from one who was after the nature of God's heart of grace and mercy. It seems that David's forgiveness had no limits. In this case, the justice of Joab prevailed over the forgiving nature of David.

David's Restoration
(19:1 – 20:26)

Outline: (1) The rebuke of Joab (19:1-8), (2) The return of David (19:9-39), (3) Strife between Judah and Israel (19:40-43), (4) The rebellion of Sheba (20:1-26)

Chapter 19
THE REBUKE OF JOAB

19:1-8 ***You have shamed ... the faces of all your servants:*** Joab, of course, was right. If David's response to the death of Absalom was more important than his people's victory over a rebellion, then in the future, if there were a rebellion, the people would not respond to help David. If Absalom were allowed to live, then Joab reasoned that there would be another rebellion, for Absalom had a thirst for power.

THE RETURN OF DAVID

19:9-15 Because of the vacuum of leadership among the people, there was great confusion. It could have been that the people were blaming one another for the strife that had been allowed to enter Israel. In order to bring calm to the social confusion, David sent word to Zadok and Abiathar that they should bring him back to Jerusalem in a triumphal manner.

Amasa: This was the rebel commander of Absalom whom David made the new commander of his army. This was probably a political move in order to bring the people and soldiers who had formerly given their allegiance to Absalom, back to David who willingly forgave all for the sake of reconciling the nation.

19:16-39 The seriousness of the tyranny was reflected by the major events that happened in connection with the restoration of David to the throne. Several things occurred as David assumed his royal position as the anointed king of Israel. ***Shimei:*** His approach to David certainly illustrated the manner by which many in Israel should at this time have approached David. Shimei begged for forgiveness. If the matter had been left to Abishai, he would have executed Shimei. But because of David's mercy, Shimei was allowed to live, knowing that he would have a greater ally in Shimei alive, than dead. The extreme by which Shimei had cursed David manifested the extreme by which David had mercy (19:24-39). ***Mephibosheth:*** In the restoration of David to Jerusalem, it was learned that Ziba had earlier lied concerning Mephibosheth's loyalty. Under David's questioning, Mephibosheth again manifested his humble nature and loyalty to David. ***Barzillai:*** This eighty year old man revealed his loyalty to David by making sure that David was safely across the Jordan to Mahanaim. In David's return to Jerusalem, he was offered a place in the king's court. Because of his age, Barzillai declined the offer, but asked if his son, Chimham, could enjoy the king's company.

STRIFE BETWEEN JUDAH & ISRAEL

19:40-43 The division between Judah and Israel had by this time started. It would eventually play out in the history of Israel in the lives of the grandchildren of David. In showing loyalty to David, the northern tribes of Israel complained that the tribe of Judah had stolen away the king. This complaint was not entirely the fault of the northern tribes being disgruntled. After all, it was David who made the wrong decision to make his capital in the territory of Judah. Two previous decisions had at this time born sour fruit in reference to the unity of Israel. First, the tribes of Israel had rejected God's nationwide theocratic rule over them when they demanded that their loyalty be directed to a king on earth. Second, the king on earth established a central government in only one city of the land of promise. Jerusalem was chosen by David to be his capital. A third move on the part of David was yet to develop. During his reign he had already established a permanent location for the ark of the covenant. It was placed in Jerusalem. David had earlier asked to build a temple for the ark, but was chided by God for suggesting such. Later in David's life, however, God would concede to the request, but allow Solomon to build the temple. This act would centralize the faith of Israel around a temple in Jerusalem. This would eventually seal the fate for the division of the Israelites into the northern and southern kingdoms. After the death of Solomon, Rehoboam and Jeroboam would divide Israel, with two tribes in the south (Judah and Benjamin), and the rest in the northern part of Palestine under the rule of Jeroboam. The division of Israel was thus caused by men deciding to do that which God never intended for the twelve tribes. The seeds of the division were unknowingly planted by David. In his efforts to promote unity in Israel he actually established that which would eventually lead to the division of the tribes. It was for this reason that God never wanted an earthly king to reign in Israel. He only accommodated a king in order that we learn from Israel's mistakes (See comments Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11).

Chapter 20

THE REBELLION OF SHEBA

20:1-4 ***Sheba:*** Sheba was a rebellious person, and thus after the fall of Absalom, he continued a minor rebellion against David. He possibly took advantage of the complaints of the northern tribes that they expressed in 19:40-43. The fact that a significant number of men followed Sheba indicated that the men of Judah had not fully appeased the complaints of the northern tribes. ***Living in widowhood:*** Since these concubines of David had been previously defiled by Absalom in public, David no longer slept with them. He confined them to a house and provided for them until the day of their deaths.

20:5-7 ***Amasa ... delayed:*** Amasa was the former rebel commander of Absalom's army. It may have been that he personally knew Sheba, and thus delayed in order to allow him time to escape, or muster an army to battle against those who were loyal to David. ***Abishai:*** When Amasa delayed, David immediately gave Abishai the responsibility of quickly assembling an army of men to put down the rebellion of Sheba.

20:8-13 Joab had been demoted when Amasa was appointed as the commander of David's army. On this occasion, however, the opportunity arose for Joab to rid himself of this one who had formerly given allegiance to Absalom and led his army in rebellion against David. Under the pretense of being a friend, and on his way to those who rebelled, he murdered Amasa in the middle of the road (Compare 3:27). Unfortunately, the dead body of their commander, Amasa, became an obstacle in the road to the soldiers who were in hot pursuit of Sheba. When he was removed from the road, all the people followed after the command of Joab.

20:14-22 ***Bethmaachah:*** This fortified city was in the far north of Palestine, near Dan, in the territory of Naphtali. Sheba had run as far north as possible, away from the army that was led by Joab. ***Berites:*** Bichri was the father of Sheba (20:1). ***A woman:*** When the men would take no lead for the preservation of their city, a wise woman stepped forward to negotiate terms for peace. There was only one term for peace, the head of Sheba, which the men of Bethmaachah cut off and threw over the wall to Joab.

20:23-26 For the sake of posterity, the key people of David's government are here listed (See 8:16-18; 1 Ch 18:14-17). Some changes were made from earlier accounts of these key people, but the kingdom reign of David continued under the maintenance of those who exercised the leadership of his government.

Appendix To David's Reign

(21:1 – 24:25)

Outline: (1) Gibeonite revenge (21:1-14), (2) Heroic courage in

battle (21:15-22), (3) Psalm of thanksgiving (22:1-51), (4) Final words of David (23:1-7), (5) David's mighty men (23:8-23), (6) Legion of honor (23:24-39), (7) The sin of the census (24:1-25)

Chapter 21

The remaining events that are listed in the last four chapters of 2 Samuel are principal events that took place during the reign of David. These seven events are not necessarily in chronological order.

GIBEONITE REVENGE

21:1-14 What the Gibeonites requested and were granted by David was not by the commandment of God. In fact, such was against the law of God (See Nm 35:33; Dt 24:16). Nevertheless, the Gibeonites with whom Joshua and Israel had made a covenant upon Israel's entrance into the land of Palestine (Ja 9:15), wanted their revenge on the house of Saul. Except for Mephibosheth with whom David had sworn to protect, those whom the Gibeonites had requested were delivered to them. What David allowed in the request for revenge on the part of the Gibeonites may have been the reason for the "bloody man" accusation that came from Shimei (16:7,8). We are not told exactly when this event occurred during the reign of David. It probably occurred sometime before the rebellion of Absalom. If so, David's motives may have been that he was weary of rebellion, and thus had executed through the demand of the Gibeonites anyone of Saul's heritage who might instigate a rebellion. He may have thought that there may still come a rebellion from the house of Saul. Unfortunately, according to the prophecy of Nathan, the rebellion came from David's own house. ***God was moved by prayer:*** After the final purge of those who would pose a possible rebellion, there was prayer in the land. The prayer of David and the people brought into Israel the power of God to preserve the people and the land. Foreign forces were stayed, and thus under the reign of David there was peace from those outside the land of Palestine.

HEROIC COURAGE IN BATTLE

21:15-22 Four brave men who gave their allegiance to David changed the history of Israel, and possibly changed world history. They were Abishai, Sibbechai, Elhanan and Jonathan. The deliverance of David by these four men occurred early in the reign of David in Israel's war against the Philistines. Because of the loyalty of these men of courage, David was saved and the history of Israel was changed. Because of their courage, the Holy Spirit inspired the writer of this text to list their names for the posterity of Israel. Sometimes insignificant battles of history change world history. Since these men were named by the Holy Spirit, we assume that their efforts to save David had historical consequences in the history of mankind.

Chapter 22
PSALM OF THANKSGIVING

This entire chapter is found in Psalm 18. These words were probably written by David in the days of his early deliverance from Saul and his victories over the Philistines.

22:1-4 David used metaphors of the wilderness where he was in his flight as a refugee. He used these metaphors in order to express his feelings for the protection of God. Notice the following metaphors: rock, fortress, shield, high tower, refuge.

22:5-7 In flight from Saul, David was in deep distress. He fled from the threats of the ungodly. On every side he was confronted by death.

22:8-19 Regardless of the threat of his environment, God came to the rescue of David. Natural forces (darkness, wind, thunder, and lightning) were used by the omnipotent God to save David from death. Though confronted with the gravest of dangers, God's powers overcame every obstacle that would bring destruction to His anointed.

22:20-25 Because of his obedience to the will of God, God came to the rescue of David. God protects those who show their allegiance to Him through their obedience to His will. Though David walked through the valley of the shadow of death, his blessing from God was that troublesome events in his life were used by God to mold his character.

22:26-30 God's help for man is conditional. It is conditioned on the obedience of men to the will of God. In this way He is the Savior of His people who are in trouble, but an obstacle to those who are rebellious. He is a lamp for direction only to those who follow after His commandments.

22:31-35 God is the strength and power of the one who has given himself to the direction of His word. One's way is perfect, or complete, when he follows the perfect, or complete will of God.

22:36-46 In this historical context, David gave all credit to God for his victories in wars against those who opposed him. He knew that he was the anointed king of Israel, and thus any who would oppose him were working against the will of God. Even if people schemed against God's anointed, their schemes would be brought to naught simply because of the obedience of God's anointed. As long as the anointed walked in the ways of God, God would walk with him and work for him.

22:47-51 David ends this song with praise of God and prayer for His continued help. David realized that he retained his kingship only because it was God working to preserve His anointed. He realized that his own sovereignty over the nation of Israel rested in the authority of God. His kingship was the desire of the people that was accommodated by the anointing of God.

Chapter 23
FINAL WORDS OF DAVID

23:1-7 These were the last inspired words of David, the sweet psalmist of Israel. His inspired psalms are recorded in the book of Psalms. ***The Spirit of God spoke by me:*** David said that *"the Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue."* The Spirit here spoke words by use of David's mouth. He did the same by all the inspired prophets (See Ps 95:7-10; Is 1:1,2). Jesus said of David, *"For David himself said by the Holy Spirit"* (Mk 12:36). When the prophet spoke by inspiration, therefore, it was the Spirit speaking. Peter defined it thus, *"The Holy Spirit spoke before*

by the mouth of David" (At 1:16). In the same way *"the Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah"* (At 28:25). When an Old Testament prophet is quoted in the New Testament, it is often stated, *"as the Holy Spirit says ..."* (See Hb 3:7). Credit is given to the Spirit for the speaking. ***He who rules:*** The king who is anointed by God must rule with justice and fear of God. ***Morning without clouds:*** Those who rule nations determine the morals of the nation. The citizens behave according to their chiefs, presidents and kings. In his life, David confessed that he had fallen short of the moral platitude that God expected. ***Everlasting covenant:*** The covenant was steadfast in that God would bring about the promises that He made when He established the covenant with Israel (See Is 55:3; At 13:34). In contrast, those who live in rebellion against God will find their certain punishment in the fire of hell (See Mt 25:41).

DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN

23:8-23 The list of mighty men here is also found in 1 Ch 11:11-25. There are some variations in spelling between the two texts, which we would attribute to the time of writing between this account and the writing of the Chronicles that was possibly in the middle of the 5th century B.C. Since language and pronunciation change, the names of this list changed from the time 2 Samuel and the Chronicles were written. ***Mighty men:*** These were the men who were loyal to the anointing of David as king of Israel. The record of these men here is a memorial to their success in bringing David to the throne of Israel, as well as maintaining his reign. The record of these men teaches that the foundation upon which any king would reign is the bravery and loyalty of those who follow him. There would have been no King David of Israel if it were not for the men listed here who loyally stood behind him as the anointed of God. Their loyalty to the anointed king, therefore, affected history because of David's effect on history. Our loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ will do the same in reference to our family.

LEGION OF HONOR

23:24-39 We would assume that these men changed throughout the 40-year reign of David, thus explaining why there are some differences between this list and the one presented in 1 Ch 11:26-47. This special legion of honorable men brought David to the throne of Israel. Throughout his reign, men as these sustained his reign. The strength of men as this certainly intimidate those who would rebel against David. Their strength thus maintained peace. David's reign was sustained in his strength to overcome all opposition. This record was also for those throughout the history of Israel who would follow the example of these heroes. It was necessary that the nation of Israel have a record of her heroes. The preservation of Israel depended on those who would in the future follow the bravery of those who sustained the reign of David.

Chapter 24

THE SIN OF THE CENSUS

24:1-9 The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel: When this statement is made in Scripture, dire consequences result from the sin that is committed. ***He moved David against them:*** The difficulty in understanding this verse and what happened in this context, is in determining the antecedent of the pronoun "he." If reference were to David, then the verse would be saying that God moved David to do that which was sinful in order that He might have an occasion to punish Israel for some sin that is not mentioned. However, 1 Chronicles 21:1 would probably be the commentary on the statement that is made here. *"Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel."* The two statements together would mean that God allowed Satan to tempt David as He allowed Satan to tempt Job (See Jb 1). ***Number Israel:*** We would assume that the numbering was a manifestation of a lack of faith in the protecting hand of God. It could have been that this occurred at a spiritually low point in David's life, and thus God sought to teach all Israel that her strength was not in the might of her army, but in the work of God through her army. It seems that Israel had forgotten the days when God worked through Israel's army to conquer the land of Palestine. The numbering of the army, therefore, was an insult to the omnipotence of God's work through the army of Israel. ***Dan even to Beersheba:*** See 3:20; 17:11; Jg 20:1; 1 Sm 3;20. ***The king's word prevailed:*** The numbering was evidently the plan of David alone, not Joab or the captains of the army who disagreed with the numbering.

24:10-17 ***David's heart troubled him:*** David came to his spiritual senses. In this case, it was he who first confessed his sin, not God who approached him as He did through Nathan. Consequences had to be suffered for the sin. David had a choice. Israel could endure seven years of famine. David could endure three months as a fugitive. Or, Israel could suffer three days of pestilence. Since David desired to fall into the hands of the Lord, and not man, he chose the pestilence. The result was the death of 70,000 people. The plague was checked only when it reached Jerusalem at the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite.

24:18-25 ***Altar to the Lord:*** David purchased from Araunah the place where the plague was stopped. This was the site on which he built an altar of remembrance to the Lord. The altar was David's thanksgiving to God for sparing the nation. It is worthy to note in this example that David did not, as a man of God, expect anything for free. Those who expect something for free do not understand the ownership that leaders must take in leading the people of God. Paul revealed that he may have wronged the Corinthians by preaching the gospel to them without their taking ownership of their responsibility to support him as an evangelist (See comments 2 Co 11:7-11; 3 Jn 6-9). ***Fifty shekels:*** This price was the price of the site, plus the oxen and instruments of the threshing floor. The 600 shekels mentioned in 1 Ch 21:25 would have been the price for the entire surrounding area, for it was upon this entire site that the temple was eventually built. Some do not realize, therefore, that in this personal payment by David for the surrounding grounds, that he was actually paying personally for the grounds upon which the Temple was later constructed. Great men of God will always make great sacrifices for the work of God in the years to come. Men of vision see into the future.

1 Kings

WRITER

As with many of the Old Testament books, it is difficult to determine the inspired writer of 1 & 2 Kings. In reference to these two books, some Bible students have assumed that Jeremiah was the inspired writer. This assumption is based on the similarity between various sections of 1 & 2 Kings and the book of Jeremiah (Compare 2 Kg 24:18 – 25:30 and Jr 52:1-34). Other than assuming that Jeremiah was the writer, it is difficult to determine the writer, though we understand that the Jews accepted Jeremiah as one of their major prophets.

DATE

It is not possible to determine an exact date of writing of this book. The time that elapsed during 1 Kings was about 120 years. These years began with the death of David in 970 B.C. and the coronation of Solomon. The record of history of the kingdom of Israel continued to the death of King Ahab in the northern kingdom and Jehoshaphat in the southern kingdom around 893 B.C. Since the temple was still standing at the time of writing, both 1 & 2 Kings were written before the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple by the Babylonian Empire in 586 B.C. However, latter portions of the book could have been written after the fall, with an inspired writer writing the final material of 2 Kings after 586 B.C.

BOOK

1 & 2 Kings were originally one book. They were divided into the two books we have in our Bibles today with the translation of the Hebrew text into Greek when the Septuagint was produced in the 3rd century B.C. The Kings and Chronicles are a history of how most the monarchies of Israel after David went wrong, and led the people after other gods. 1 & 2 Kings begin with the final years of David's reign, and continue with Israelite history to the release of Jehoiachin from a Babylonian prison.

Throughout 1 & 2 Kings reference is made to three sources of Israelite history that were not inspired, but were in the hands of the writer. Reference is made to (1) *"the book of the acts of Solomon"* (1 Kg 11:41), (2) *"the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel"* (1 Kg 14:19; 15:31; 16:5), and (3) *"the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah"* (1 Kg 14:29; 15:7,23).

1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles are related, but not focused on the same plot. There are many passages in both Kings and Chronicles that are almost identical. Both records contain historical information concerning both the northern and southern kingdoms of the twelve tribes. However, Chronicles focuses primarily on the history of the southern kingdom of Judah. Chronicles also deals with the religious history while Kings focuses more on the political developments and decline of the people of God in the northern kingdom, which kingdom would eventually go into Assyrian captivity.

APOSTASY

As Bible students study through the books of the Kings and Chronicles, one question will always come to mind. Why did Israel, with such a rich history of the direct work of God, fall into the extreme apostasy of worshiping imagined gods, and in some cases, sacrificing their own children to these gods? The answer to the question lies in the nature of how we, as created religious beings, conduct ourselves in reference to divine authority. We seek to be free from accountability, especially accountability in reference to our Creator. Though God gives us divine directives by which we should conduct ourselves, we seek to do that which is right in our own eyes. This desire leads to a gradual fall from a conscious responsibility to submit to the word of God. It may take generations for this apostasy to play out in the history of any particular society, but the decline and fall of all civilizations is inevitable without a conscious sense of being accountable to a High Power.

A study of the Kings and Chronicles is a classic example of how men move away from being accountable to God. God originally did not want Israel to have a king. He knew what would happen. Having a king in Israel was more than centralizing government around one man on earth. God had originally intended that He only be their King, and that He would reign from heaven through the authority of His word that was taught by the Levites. This was a very successful plan that held Israel together for over four hundred years. But Israel rejected this theocratic system, for they sought to continue to live after their own desires. They could manipulate a king, but they could not change the law of God. God, therefore, had to go and the kings with their false gods had to come in order that they could do that which was right in their own eyes.

Once a king was anointed, the rapidity of the apostasy accelerated. The kings became political in order to

retain the favor of the people. This point is brought out clearly in the kingship of Saul, for he yearned for the approval of the people. In the life of David, however, it was different. David sought to direct Israel according to the commandments of God. He had a deep sense of responsibility to obey the will of God. But after David, everything changed. From the time of Solomon the mold for apostasy was established as each king, except for a few, followed after the gods of the nations they failed to eliminate from the land. The people sought to live after their own desires. It started with Solomon, David's son, who sought to please all his idolatrous wives. The religious beliefs of the people gradually changed to focus on the lusts of man, not the commandments of God that were considered too restrictive.

As a society that sought to create religious behavior after one's own desires, it was easy to create a god that would condone their desires. When the culture of the society has been established for ruin for decades, even the righteous actions on the part of a king who would seek to restore the people to God will not turn the people from continued digression. When Israel initially arrived at the Jordan in order to possess the land under the leadership of Joshua, the Canaanites, because of their culture of sin, had given up their right for existence. However, Israel, throughout her history, followed the same social route as the Canaanites. At the end of Israel's history, the twelve tribes of Israel were left with only a remnant existence after the Babylonian captivity. It was a tragic ending to such a great nation of people who had been miraculously delivered out of Egyptian captivity. Their search for God brought them out of captivity. Their forsaking of God took them back into captivity. Only through repentance were they able to again come out of captivity.

The political desire of a king to maintain the favor of the people increased when kings started to assassinate one another. Israel digressed from God-anointed kings, to people-appointed kings, then finally to foreign-appointed kings. Paranoia developed among the kings as they turned from being obedient to God who anointed them, to politically pleasing the people who appointed them, and then finally, to pleasing the foreign nations who appointed their kings for them. The script of this play is written in the Kings and Chronicles. It is written for many nations throughout the world today who would forsake teaching the principles of God to their people.

Once the leadership of Israel was changed, then it was easy for the people to follow after that which became commonly practiced. In order for commonly accepted religious behavior to be imposed on others, false prophets were chosen to intimidate all who would not comply with the norm of social and religious behavior. Any person who would speak against the message of the community of false prophets was shunned, and thus considered a troubler of Israel. Once this religious culture was established, then there was no level too low to which the society of Israel could sink. It was for this reason that God did not want a central government in Israel that was centered around a king. He did not want the religion centralized. He did not want any particular tribe to take ownership of His presence by the construction of a temple like the religions of the nations around Israel. Unfortunately, Israel did all the preceding, and thus we have the inscription of the Kings and Chronicles that explain how this epic history played itself out in the lives of the Israelites who fell from the one true and living God in order to serve a god they created after their own imagination..

In man's inner self there is a God-created sense of

IDOL WORSHIP

worship. Regardless of God's written revelation concerning how He seeks to be worshiped, men often devise their own expressions and places of worship. This apostasy in worship is brought out clearly in the Kings and Chronicles. In reference to the worship of Israel in her digression into apostasy, three key things constantly appear in the worship of the Israelites that were related to their apostasy. (1) People seek to do that which is right in their own eyes, and then create a concept of god that conforms to their behavior. This is the spirit of idolatry. The gods of the nations around Israel, which gods Israel adopted, were not really gods, but only the imagination of the people who sought to live according to their own desires. Once the false god was created in one's mind, then the natural thing to do was to relate to that god through an image or idol that one created to symbolize the god. The worshiper then established a place to which he could go in order to worship his imagined god. (2) People seek to sanctify a place where they can act out their worship through various acts of worship or ceremonies. By doing this they are seeking to leave the environment of their daily lives in order to "go to" a place where they can worship. This gives them the opportunity to feel that they can leave their daily conduct, and then go to face God at a place where they can feel worshipful. The places that the apostate Israelites constructed for this worshipful feeling were called the "high places." These places were often associated with sexual orgies, and in some cases, human sacrifices. Regardless of the reforms that some kings made at different times throughout the digression of Israel into apostasy, these places to which people went with offerings in order to commit deplorable acts of worship, were usually not destroyed. (3) People seem to feel closer to God on high places, and thus, the Asherah (wooded places, or groves) were built on high hills. These were sanctified places of worship. The high places were thus sacred and prevailed throughout the history of the apostasy. The high places became customary places to go for worship, and thus the reforming kings usually did not touch these places in their restoration movements.

The high places played a significant role in the apos-

tasy of both the northern and southern kingdoms. When Israel entered the promised land, God told them to destroy all the molten images, figured idols and high places (Nm 33:52). But they failed to drive out all the Canaanites (Jg 1:19-35), and thus failed to eradicate the idolatry and high places from the land. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who lived after them (Ja 24:31; Jg 2:7). However, after these great leaders the worship of the Canaanites began to play a part in the worship of Israel. In the days of the judges, the worship of Baal became a strong part of Israelite worship, for the judges often had to deal with idol worship (See Jg 6:25). When Solomon became king, idol worship on high places was entrenched in the worship culture of Israel. Restorers as Hezekiah destroyed the high places (2 Ch 31:1), but apostate kings as Manasseh restored them as places to which people could go for worship (2 Ch 33:3). When Manasseh was disciplined by the Lord by captivity, and then restored to his throne, he was a changed person. However, he failed to destroy the high places to which people continually when to perform their acts of worship (2 Ch 33:17). The extent to which apostasy and restoration went in Israel depended on whether the high places were retained or destroyed in the worship culture of Israel (Compare Josiah's restoration - 2 Kg 23:1-25).

The culture of going to the high places worked against God's original plan that worship be family oriented and conducted according to the general principles that Moses taught in Deuteronomy 6. But the simplicity of God's original plan that worship be focused at home in the daily lives of every person was too simple for the people in comparison to the Canaanites who had elaborate temples and went to the high places for entertaining worship behavior. Once this Canaanite worship culture became a part of the culture of Israel, it was not possible to detour their end in captivity, for it led them away from God. And in being led away from God, they lost their purpose for existing as a nation.

Final Days Of David
(1:1 – 2:11)

Outline: (1) The presumption of Adonijah (1:1-37), (2) Coronation of Solomon (1:38-53), (3) David's charge to Solomon (2:1-11)

Chapter 1

THE PRESUMPTION OF ADONIJAH

1:1-4 Before David breathed this last breath, Solomon was reigning as king of Israel. ***A young woman:*** In the final hours of life, the body temperature of David could not be maintained. We must keep in mind that David was in his 70's at this time. The custom was to use the warmth of a young woman to lie next to the one who needed the extra body heat. ***Sexual relations:*** Some translations use the word "know" in reference to sexual relations between a man and woman. The writer wants us to understand that the young woman was not provided for any sexual gratification, but simply to make David more comfortable in his dying days.

1:5-10 ***Adonijah ... exalted himself:*** Adonijah's selfish ambition moved him to presumptuously assume that he could work against the will of God by making himself king. Being the son of Haggith (2 Sm 3:4), he may have assumed that he was a rightful heir to the throne of David. ***His father had not rebuked him at any time:*** Because Adonijah did not learn respect for authority in his youth, he had no respect for authority when he grew up. A house that does not exercise discipline of the children in the home produces children who have no respect for authority when they leave the home. ***Joab ... Abiathar:*** Though these two were also in their old age, we are not told why they sided with Adonijah. They had been faithful to David in the past. In this case they seem to assume that Adonijah would be the rightful heir of David. However, Zadok, Benaiah, Nathan, Shimei and Rei knew the wishes of both God and David. They were thus not invited to Adonijah's celebration of his supposed rise to the throne.

1:11-37 ***Nathan spoke to Bathsheba:*** Nathan, the prophet, knew that God's choice of who would be king was more important than the firstborn becoming the heir to the throne (See Dt 17:15). If Adonijah assumed the throne, then there would be a great threat to the life of both Bathsheba, Solomon's mother (2 Sm 12:24,25), and Solomon. ***Solomon ... will reign:*** This was David's reaffirmation of the reign of Solomon. There could be no doubt in the minds of those present that this was the final wish of David in reference to who would come to the throne of Israel (See comments 2 Sm 7).

CORONATION OF SOLOMON

1:38-40 David realized the seriousness of Adonijah's presumption to be king. He thus acted quickly in having Solomon publicly anointed (Compare 1 Sm 16:11-13; 2 Sm 5:3). ***My own mule:*** Only the rightful king could ride on the king's mule. ***The earth shook:*** The response of this great number of people testified to the fact that they had accepted Solomon as the new king of Israel.

1:41-53 Adonijah and his party were close enough to Gihon to hear the great rejoicing of the people when Solomon was anointed king. Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, came to Adonijah and confirmed the fact that Solomon was the crowned king of Israel. ***The guests ... with Adonijah were afraid:*** They were afraid because they realized that the anointing of Solomon meant that those who aligned themselves with the presumption of Adonijah were now considered insurrectionists. They thus fled for their lives. ***Took hold of the horns of the altar:*** Adonijah assumed that this action would protect him from the judgment of death for his insurrectionist actions to be the king of Israel. ***If he will show himself a worthy man:*** Solomon's mercy on Adonijah depended on Adonijah's future behavior. He would be granted life if in the future he submitted to the kingship of Solomon. Unfortunately, Adonijah's selfish ambition led him to forsake his commitment that he made at this time. As a result, his selfish ambition cost him his life.

Chapter 2

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON

2:1-4 ***Walk in His ways:*** David's greatest concern was that Solomon live in obedience to the will of God. ***Statutes:*** These would be guidelines that would direct one in holy living (See Ex 30:21; Lv 10:13-15). ***Commandments:*** See Ex 20:1-17. ***Judgments:*** These would be decisions concerning cases not defined in the law, but were the result of wisdom that was guided by the word of God (See Ex 21:1 – 23:5). ***Testimonies:*** This would be any principle that would give witness to wisdom that came from God (See Ps 19:7; 119:88). ***Not lack a man on the throne of Israel:*** Obedience to God would guarantee that the descendants of Solomon would continue to reign on the throne (See 2 Sm 7:12-16).

2:5-9 David had left some judgments undone during his reign. In these words he instructed Solomon to enact these judgments that he had personally failed to do. It is possible that David did not carry out these judgments because of his feelings of guilt for causing the death of Uriah. ***Joab:*** Joab had blood on his hands in reference to his murder of Abner (2 Sm 3:27) and Amasa (2 Sm 20:8-10). Since David was responsible for the safety of these two men, he felt that judgment should come upon Joab for his acts of murder. Solomon was thus given the charge to judge Joab according to his crimes. ***Sons of Barzillai:*** Barzillai had assisted David during the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sm 17:27-29). Since Barzillai was dead at this time, David wanted Solomon to bring the sons of Barzillai into his court in order to extend the kindness of which they were deserving because of the help of their father. ***Shimei:*** Shimei had previously shown contempt for David, the anointed of God (2 Sm 16:5-13). However, David, at the time, did not punish Shimei according to his crime (2 Sm 19:18-23). Since David had not punished Shimei for his disrespect for the anointed of God, he asked Solomon to render just judgment.

2:10-12 The death of David was the end of a legacy that would never be repeated again in Israel. Never again would a king arise in Israel who served God while he recognized the weaknesses of his own life. On many occasions, the Holy Spirit in the Kings refers us back to the righteousness of David in keeping the commandments of the Lord. ***Established:*** Solomon's reign after David was firmly established because the authority of God's king on earth was passed from David to Solomon. All Israel recognized that Solomon was the rightful king. Unfortunately, by the end of Solomon's life, he would leave a legacy of idolatry that would be followed by other kings.

The Reign Of Solomon (2:12 – 11:43)

Outline: (1) Solomon's judgments (2:12-46), (2) Solomon's wisdom (3:1-28), (3) Solomon's wealth (4:1-34), (4) Solomon's building (5:1 – 7:51), (5) Dedication of the temple (8:1-66), (6) God's covenant with Solomon (9:1-9), (7) Solomon's fame (9:10-28), (8) Visit by a queen (10:1-13), (9) Solomon's tax of the people (10:14-29), (10) Solomon's apostasy and death (11:1-43)

SOLOMON'S JUDGMENTS

In assuming the authority of his reign, Solomon was given instructions by David concerning individuals whose judgment had to be administered by Solomon. This context records the judgments handed down by Solomon, which judgments signaled to everyone the beginning of a new era of kingship.

2:12-25 ***Adonijah:*** David had already mercifully judged Adonijah. However, there was a spirit of arrogance in Adonijah that drove him to carry out again his selfish ambition to act presumptuously. By asking for Abishag he was making a subtle effort to usurp the kingship of Israel. Abishag was part of David's kingship harem. Adonijah presumed that if he could marry Abishag, he could ease himself back into a position to usurp the throne. The custom was that if someone took ownership of a king's harem, he was claiming the right to assume the authority of the dead king (See 2 Sm 3:6-11; 16:22). Solomon clearly understood this, and thus was not as gullible as Bathsheba concerning the desires of Adonijah. Adonijah's desires were treasonous, and thus deserved the penalty of death.

2:26,27 ***Abiathar:*** As a priest during the reign of David, it was probably difficult for Abiathar to now turn his loyalty to one who was only a child throughout the principal years of his priesthood. Because of his former loyalty to David, and because he was a rightful priest of God, Solomon extended mercy to Abiathar. He was banished to Anathoth which was a city for the Levites (See Ja 21:8,18; Jr 1:1). Abiathar was of the priestly lineage of Ithamar. His banishment thus meant the end of the lineage of Eli's heritage from being high priests in Israel (1 Sm 2:27-36).

2:28-34 ***Joab:*** Solomon rendered justice on Joab for his murderous actions in the past. If he remained unpunished, the guilt of David would have been passed on to Solomon. Joab's clinging to the horns of the altar brought him no mercy as it did for Adonijah during the days of David (1:52). He was justly executed.

2:35 ***Benaiah ... Zadok:*** With the change of a new king, came the change in leaders of the military and high priesthood. Benaiah replaced Joab as the commander of the military. Zadok replaced Abiathar (See 2 Sm 20:25).

2:36-46 ***Shimei:*** It was only because of David's feelings of guilt in reaping the curse of Nathan, the prophet, concerning his killing of Uriah, that Shimei was still living. When in flight from Absalom during his rebellion, Shimei had cursed David, the anointed of God (2 Sm 16:5). He was living in Bahurim, but at this time was placed under house arrest in Jerusalem away from his kinsmen. He would be safe from the death penalty as long as he remained in Jerusalem. Unfortunately for him, he did not honor the restrictions of his confinement. His rebellious heart was manifested when he ignored the restrictions of his confinement in order to track down two of his slaves. His violation of his confinement rules under the reign of Solomon was just cause for his execution because of his crime against David. Punishment in the present brought justice for sin that was committed in the past. ***The kingdom was established:*** Solomon's kingdom reign was established in the sense that he exercised wise judgment in cases where

justice was to be handed down to offenders. Injustices of the past had been rectified. The authority of his reign was recognized among the people.

Chapter 3
SOLOMON'S WISDOM

3:1-3 ***Made an alliance:*** This was a political move. Solomon practiced a custom by which alliances were sealed between two countries by marriage. In sealing the alliance, the king of one country would take in marriage the daughter of the country with which the alliance was made. Since Israel was the stronger nation, the treaty would have been advantageous to Egypt, with whom Israel established trade agreements (See 10:26-29). In such marriages, Israelites could marry foreigners, as long as the foreigners renounced their gods (Dt 21:10-14). However, they could not marry Canaanites (Ex 34:11-16; Dt 7:1-5). ***High places:*** These were the common locations for Canaanite sacrifices that were made to false gods. When the Israelites came into the land of Palestine about 400 years before these events, they were to destroy all such places where pagan worship was carried out (Dt 12:1-4). God wanted the Israelites to destroy these places of worship to pagan gods lest they be influenced by the Canaanite religion that was associated with the high places. Unfortunately, by this time in the history of Israel the tabernacle ceased to be moved among the tribal territories, and thus the people sought other places to make their sacrifices. They thus adopted the tradition of worship on the high places that the Canaanites had used in their worship of false gods. In this context, reference was made to the geographical locations where the people sacrificed to God. In their apostasy, however, Israel started sacrificing to false gods on these high places. The high places, therefore, became a biblical reference to the apostasy of Israel

3:4-15 (2 Ch 1:1-13) ***The king went to Gibeon:*** The tabernacle was located at Gibeon during the days of David's reign and the first part of the reign of Solomon. Burnt offerings were thus made in Gibeon. The ark of the covenant, however, was located in a tent in Jerusalem (2 Ch 1:2-4). ***Ask what I will give you:*** Solomon's answer to this open invitation to ask of God was based on his appreciation for all that God had done for him. Because he realized the great responsibility that was given to him to lead God's people, he was humbled, and thus asked for understanding in order that he might lead the people with justice. ***The speech pleased the Lord:*** Because Solomon's request was not focused on himself for long life or riches, God heard his prayer. Because of his unselfish request, God gave him more than he asked. God's answer also illustrates that He sometimes answers prayer in different ways than what we request. Our prayer is answered, and often answered in a greater way than that for which we prayed.

3:16-28 The people had direct access to the king. In this particular judgment, the wisdom of Solomon was manifested, which wisdom came to him from God. Because of his wise judgments, Solomon's fame went throughout the surrounding nations and beyond. The writer gives this one incident in judgment in order to illustrate the wise judgments that Solomon handed down to those who came before him.

Chapter 4
SOLOMON'S WEALTH

4:1-6 ***King over all Israel:*** In his victories over the enemies of Israel, David handed his son Solomon a kingdom that was ready for peace and prosperity. At the time of Solomon's reign, Israel was one united nation. But at the time these words were written, the kingdom had been divided into Israel, the northern kingdom, and Judah, the southern kingdom (See vs 20). ***These were the princes:*** Some of these chief officials of Solomon undoubtedly began their service before the reign of Solomon. These were the servants of Solomon (3:15) who were the administrators of the business of the kingdom of Israel. The interpreter must keep in mind when reading through this list of princes, priests, scribes and related administrators, that most of these functions in the kingdom reign of Solomon were a departure from God's original plan for the administration of His people. It must not be forgotten that God originally organized Israel as a theocracy to be ruled directly from heaven through the law, which was administered by the Levites. Minor decisions were to be determined by the Urim and Thummim of the Levites (Ex 28:30; Lv 8:8; Dt 33:8). God determined directly through the Urim and Thummim those minor decisions that were now, in many ways, determined by Solomon. This chapter reveals that the center for decision-making in Israel went from God through the Levitical priests to Solomon the king. The result of this transfer of focus from God and the Levites is a lesson for us to learn from the history of the Old Testament (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). Solomon's reign began with grandeur, but ended in apostasy. As the fallible leader of the people who first brought glory to God, he eventually led the people away from God by turning to the gods of the wives he married. His leadership set the moral standard for the people, and thus Israel was led into division immediately after his reign because the people were provoked by the centralization of government in Jerusalem that was centered around the kingship lineage that came from David. Though Solomon was great in his administration of a kingdom, he was humanly fallible in setting moral standards for the preservation of those over whom he reigned. ***Priest:*** This priest functioned as an advisor to the king. ***Scribe:*** The scribes functioned as the correspondent for the king to the people and foreign nations. ***Recorder:*** This person recorded the annuals of the kingdom. ***Abiathar:*** Abiathar was banished from the presence of Solomon (2:27,35). However, since the high priesthood was hereditary, he still maintained his position, though not necessarily his function among the people. He was a high priest in name only. ***Nathan:*** This was the son of David, not the prophet, Nathan (See 2 Sm 5:14). Thus Azariah and Zabud were the nephews of Solomon. ***Over the household:*** This person functioned as Joseph in Egypt in that he conducted the affairs of the king's house (See Gn 41:40). The responsibilities of this person would be daily meeting with the head of state in order to carry out the administration of the king's court.

4:7-19 The description of the duties of the officers in this context fully manifest that Israel had now moved into a monarchy. Government was centralized around the king, and the

king was situated in Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom. Administration of kingdom affairs was carried out by designated officials who collected taxes, conscripted men into the army, and exercised administrative control over the affairs of the kingdom. Government construction projects as roads and buildings were carried out by designated officials who received their orders from Jerusalem. This administration from one man in Jerusalem began the rift that would eventually divide the nation of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms. Because the control was centered in Judah alone, the northern tribes would eventually turn from such heavy control and taxation and make Jeroboam their king.

4:20-34 ***Judah and Israel:*** At the time of the writing of 1 Kings, the kingdom had already divided. ***Sea in multitude:*** This was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3; 22:17; 28:14). ***Making merry:*** This writer wants us to know that the result of the peace that prevailed throughout the land was the happiness of the people. One of the advantages of the military strength of Israel that began under David, and continued under Solomon, was the strength of a people who were able to dwell in happiness because their enemies had been defeated. This was certainly the climax of the Israelite kingdom. The extent of Solomon's kingdom was made possible by conquest over nations within the Palestine region, and the subjection of surrounding nations who were made to pay tribute. ***The River:*** The River Euphrates. ***Provisions for one day:*** The food for the king's court for a single day was about 340 bushels of fine flour and 155 bushels of meal. This amount of grain, plus the meat of the animals of verse 23, is in conjunction with what the people were also to provide for the Levites. Some have estimated that the size of the king's court could have been as many as 5,000 people. The tax burden of such a great number of people, therefore, was great. ***4,000 stalls:*** The number 40,000 that is given here by some translations is possibly a scribal variant since the number is probably too large. The Hebrew number for 4,000 that is given in 2 Chronicles 9:25 would be correct. This would correspond with the 1,400 chariots of 10:26. ***He was wiser than all men:*** Since his wisdom came from God, we would assume that this statement was true. Though given limited wisdom in comparison to the wisdom of God, Solomon revealed through his writing of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, possibly Job and some of the Psalms, his great wisdom and knowledge that came to him from God. The extent of his wisdom was so great that his reputation for wisdom fascinated the nations of the Near East world. The reputation of his wisdom extended even into Africa where it stimulated the curiosity of a queen who made a trip just to see for herself (10:1-10).

Chapter 5
SOLOMON'S BUILDING

5:1-6 ***I intend to build a house to the ... Lord:*** This is a significant statement in reference to the existence of the temple in Israel's history from this time forward to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. David originally felt some guilt about building his own lavish house when he said, *"See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains"* (2 Sm 7:2). Nathan, the prophet who stood before David, replied to David that he should do what was in his heart. However, in 2 Samuel 7 where the idea of the temple was first proposed by David, this response to David by Nathan was not a revelation from God, but Nathan's own statement. We would assume that Nathan himself was also wanting a building for God. The very night of the day that Nathan responded in approval of David concerning the building of a temple, God came to David with the question, *"Would you build for Me a house in which to dwell?"* (2 Sm 7:5). God then proceeded to chide David for his suggestion to build a physical structure for the ark. God rebuked, *"For I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day. But I have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle"* (2 Sm 7:6). For over 400 years the tabernacle was moved about among the tribes without God ever asking that any one tribe build for Him a permanent house in which to place the ark (2 Sm 7:7). If one tribe would have built a house for the ark, then that tribe would have laid claim to the ark. But this is exactly what David and Solomon were doing with their plans to build the temple in Jerusalem. At this time, Solomon intended to carry out the desire of David and Nathan. This was not the desire of God, though He accommodated their plans. But in accommodating the plan to build the temple, God knew that it would become an occasion for the division of the twelve tribes of Israel. It is in this context that Solomon here intends to carry out his own desire, though he plans to do such in the name of the Lord. This is a case, as in the choosing of a king to reign over Israel, where God allowed something to happen, though it was never in His original plans for the nation of Israel. He never intended that the leadership of Israel be centered around a king. He never intended that the government of Israel be centralized in one city. He never intended that the faith of Israel be centralized around a building in any one city of Israel. Nevertheless, men on earth chose to follow the desire of their hearts. We keep in mind that God used what men wanted to do in His name for His continued purpose with Israel to bring the Messiah into the world. It is in this historical context that God stated in 2 Chronicles 6:6, *"Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel."* David wanted to centralize government, so God chose Jerusalem. The people wanted a king on earth, so God anointed the rightful kings of Israel. Because it is stated that God chose Jerusalem and anointed the kings does not mean that either were in the original plan of God. God simply accommodated the desires of man. But in so accommodating the desires of man, God wanted us to understand the destiny to which the desires led His people (Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). In the case of Israel, the desires led Israel away from God and into a divided kingdom. God allowed Israel to follow after their own desires, but in the end, He judged them because their desires led them away from Him and His word.

5:7-18 ***Hiram:*** This Phoenician king was known for being a conqueror during his kingship. Before the reign of Hiram, the cedars of Lebanon were the envy of surrounding nations. Hiram was joyous in response to Solomon's request for the

trees because a close political relationship between his coastal kingdom and Solomon would allow trade routes through Israelite territory to the inland nations of the Near East. ***20,000 measures:*** Since wheat did not grow in Hiram's territory, the payment of approximately 103,200 bushels of wheat was significant for the feeding of the people under Hiram's control. One "measure" (Heb., *kor*) equals about 5.16 bushels. ***Hiram's builders:*** These would be Canaanite builders since Hiram's kingdom consisted of those Canaanites whom Israel was supposed to drive out of the land of promise, but did not. The Canaanites were artisans in reference to building temples to their false gods, and here we see them building in cooperation with the people of God, a temple for the God of Israel. Not only was there a political and economic union between Solomon and Hiram, but also a union in labor and religious beliefs. Though Solomon at this time was faithful to the God of Israel, later in his life he would go after the gods of the nations around him. His life would be a tragedy of faith and would illustrate the spiritual tragedy of the nation of Israel in the years to come.

Chapter 6

6:1-10 (2 Ch 3:1-14) ***Israel came out of the land of Egypt:*** The writer gives this date of 480 years in order to establish the time for the construction of the temple in reference to the exodus from Egypt (See 2 Ch 3:2). The tabernacle had been moved among the tribal territories for this number of years, thus proving that God's plan for the movement of the tabernacle worked. It was only when Israel started changing God's original plan that division, and eventually, destruction came upon Israel. Solomon reigned from 971 to 931 B.C. His reign is the only reign that can be relatively accurate in reference to the birth of Christ and our calendar today. The fourth year of his reign would be 967 B.C. According to the date given here, the date of the exodus from Egypt would be 1445 B.C., though some Bible students suggest a later date. ***Cubit:*** This was approximately 18 inches. According to this length, the temple would have been 90 feet long, 30 feet wide and 45 feet high. It was not built as a place for assembly, but a place in which to locate the ark of the covenant and the other articles of the tabernacle. ***He built:*** This phrase is used several times throughout this context. In the instructions and building of the tabernacle 480 years before, God gave all the instructions for the tabernacle's construction. It is significant here, therefore, to note that it was Solomon who was giving the instructions for the building of the temple. It was David's idea and Solomon's construction. The writer of Kings wants us to understand that the building of the temple was the idea of David and Solomon, not God. God was satisfied to allow His presence in Israel to be made known through the tabernacle, but men seek to identify the presence of God among them by building permanent structures.

6:11-13 Concerning this house that you are building: Solomon, not God, was building the temple. The exhortation of these words is not new revelation. However, it is significant that God came to Solomon with this exhortation in the midst of the building of the temple. At least the writer of the text places these words of exhortation in the middle of the temple's construction for a specific reason. The reason was surely in view of the fact that God saw that the religious pride of Israel had shifted from the temple of God in heaven where God reigns, to a physical temple on earth where some assumed God would reside. As with the apostate thinking of the nations around Israel who housed their gods, many in Israel were surely thinking that they were going to house the God of heaven in a structure that measured 90 X 30 X 45 feet. They had forgotten the word of God concerning the purpose of the tabernacle, and now they only continued their forgetfulness in the building of the temple (See comments Hs 4:6).

6:14-38 ***The house:*** The temple was called "the house" (vss 2,16) or the "house of the Lord" (vs 1). There were three parts to the temple: the porch (vs 3), the temple (vs 17), and the inner sanctuary (vs 19). The inner sanctuary ("the oracle") was the most holy place or the holy of holies (Ex 26:33). The porch, or "vestibule," was outside the temple and faced east. This was the place of the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz (7:21). The inner sanctuary contained the altar of cedar that was overlaid with gold. In the inner sanctuary were also the cherubim and the ark of the covenant. The temple was constructed with the most elaborate materials that were available at the time and with the best workmanship of skilled laborers. The seven years of construction for such a small structure indicate that great detail went into the making of every part of the structure and its contents. In reference to the details of the structure, we have difficultly visualizing the final design. Because it was built with the help of Canaanites who were not Israelites, we can form some image of the final structure by comparing it to the contemporary Canaanite temples of the times. The remains of Canaanite temples at Megiddo, Shechem, Bethel, Diber and Ras Shamra give Bible students some indication of how the temple looked in its final construction. Solomon's temple was destroyed when Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. The Babylonian conquerors destroyed the temple and carried away the remaining contents, for the original contents that Solomon placed in the temple were carried away by Shishak, the Pharaoh of Egypt. The remnant of Israel that returned from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C. rebuilt the temple, but they mourned over the fact that it was not in the splendor of the original temple (Er 3:12). King Herod the Great built another temple in its place during his reign prior to the ministry of Jesus, but again it was not in the splendor of Solomon's temple. With the description that is given in 1 Kings 6 & 7 and Ezekiel 41, we must keep in mind that all artists' drawings of Solomon's temple are an amalgamation of concepts taken from the ruins of contemporary Canaanite temples that existed in Solomon's day.

Chapter 7

7:1-12 Solomon's house was an apartment complex that housed many of those of the royal court. This may explain why it took thirteen years to build his house in comparison to the seven years to build the temple. ***A porch of pillars:*** From the throne of the porch, or judgment hall, judgments were made over cases that were brought to the king by the

people. From the description of Solomon's house that is given in this context, it is difficult to determine the exact details of the house. The description is given in wording that could be understood only by someone who had actual visual reference to the original structure. The purpose of the description in this context was to remind the original readers of the splendor of the house of Solomon that was destroyed by the Babylonians in the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Both in the description of the temple and the house of Solomon, we would assume that the writer wants the Israelites after the captivity to mourn over what their apostasy caused. It caused the destruction of these two great complexes of Solomonic construction. What was described in the context of 1 Kings 6 & 7 no longer existed because of Israel's apostasy from the word of God.

7:13-39 (2 Ch 3:15,17) The description of articles of the temple in this context indicates that the temple itself, and the palace of Solomon, were joined as one complex. Because of the loss of meaning of certain Hebrew words, what is described in this context is often difficult to understand. The biblical interpreter must not be frustrated with our impossibility to understand this description of the articles of the temple. We can be assured that the recipients of the writer's original autograph clearly understood what is herein described. We must also understand that after Solomon's death, Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt, came and plundered the temple of all its gold. In other words, in only one generation all the ornate articles that are described in this context were taken to Egypt during the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. It seems that the writer wants us to understand the vanities of gold and silver and elaborate structures. ***Hiram:*** Because of his reputation as a skilled artisan, this man was hired by Solomon to perform the duties of making the articles described in this context. This Hiram, not the King Hiram of Tyre, was from the same city. He was the son of an Israelite woman who was from the tribe of Naphtali who had married a Canaanite. ***Jachin ... Boaz:*** There was symbolic significance to the names for these two pillars that were placed in front of the temple. "Jachin" probably signified that the temple would stand forever. "Boaz" signified that God gives the temple strength and endurance. Some have suggested that Jachin referred to God establishing the throne of the king forever and Boaz signified that in the strength of God the king would rejoice. In each of the signified meanings is the thought that the king stood between God and the people. If this understanding is correct, then the two pillars reaffirmed the monarchy of Israel. Unfortunately, the role of the king of Israel was never the original plan of God. One reason why God did not want a king over His people was that when a king went morally wrong, so did those over whom he ruled. And in the case of Solomon, he led the people into idolatrous worship of pagan gods. In reference to the sins of the northern kingdom that would come into existence during the days of Jeroboam, succeeding kings would follow in the idolatrous sins of Jeroboam. ***A molten sea:*** This was a great bowl 15 feet across at the top. Some have estimated that it contained approximately 10,000 gallons of water. Its purpose was to supply the water for the ceremonial cleansings (2 Ch 4:6). ***Ten stands of brass:*** These were smaller basins that conveniently provided water for cleansing when the priest was away from the greater basin of water. ***Ten lavers:*** These were bowl-shaped portable basins that also contained water for washing. The many basins for water around the temple were for the priests who prepared the many sacrifices that were offered in reference to the temple service. The portable lavers could be wheeled to different locations in order to provide water for washing during and after the sacrifices.

7:40-51 (2 Ch 4:7,8,17-22; 5:1) ***Bright bronze:*** Some translations use "bronze," whereas some use the word "brass." Brass is a term that is used to refer to any copper alloy. Reference in this context is to burnished bronze. The Hebrew word is *nehosheth*. Discoveries of the material that was used have revealed that the material was an alloy of copper and tin. ***Between Succoth and Zarethan:*** These locations east of the Jordan have been discovered by archaeologists. Deposits of copper in great cauldrons have been traced back to the days of Solomon. These were the quarries where Solomon mined the great amount of copper that was needed for making the ornate structures and utensils for the temple. ***Gold:*** Within the temple were articles made of pure gold (2 Ch 4:7,8,19-22). Some of the gold and silver possibly came from the spoils that David had taken from kingdoms he conquered, which spoils he had dedicated to the Lord (2 Sm 8:9-12). Many Bible students have assumed that much of Solomon's gold came from places as far away as Africa. ***The treasures of the house of the Lord:*** It seems that the temple also functioned as a state treasury. One of the common purposes for temple structures in ancient times was to function as civic centers wherein was housed the treasury of the kingdom.

Chapter 8
DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

8:1-13 (2 Ch 5:2 – 6:2) ***Ark of the covenant:*** Until the building of the temple, the tabernacle was the location for the ark of the covenant. When the temple was completed, it was moved from the City of David to the permanent structure of the temple where it would stay until the temple was plundered by Shishak. ***Ethanim:*** As with the names Ziv and Bul (6:37,38), this was the name of the month that was used before the exile of the Jews in 586 B.C. After the exile, Ethanim would be called Tishri. ***To this day:*** This phrase indicates that 1 & 2 Kings were written before the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., for Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Babylonians. ***Two tablets of stone:*** These were the tablets of stone on which God had written the ten commandments at Mt. Sinai. The tablets were representative, or given in remembrance, of the covenant that God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai. The structure of the ark housed the stone tablets. ***The glory of the Lord:*** The presence of the cloud in the temple, as in the tabernacle when it was completed, was God's sanction of the temple (See Ex 40:34-38). ***A house to dwell in:*** This, of course, is not literally true. The metaphorical meaning was that the temple was the indication of God's presence among the Israelites. Since they had forsaken God's original plan of maintaining the tabernacle and its movement among the tribal territories, God accommodated the temple, and thus manifest-

ed His presence in the temple through the cloud. The omnipresent God of heaven is not confined to temples as Solomon later stated (vss 27-30).

8:14-21 (2 Ch 6:3-11) ***I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house:*** If it had been God's plan originally to choose a city and build a temple in the territory of one of the tribes, then that tribe would have taken ownership of a visible symbol of God's presence. It was not in God's original plan, therefore, to centralize His presence in any tribal territory by the building of a permanent structure as the temple. ***Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house:*** This statement answers the question as to why the temple came into existence in the history of Israel. Unto this time, God had "dwelt" in the tabernacle for 480 years. However, in the latter part of his reign, David, not God, wanted to build a permanent structure to house the ark of the covenant. Though God did not allow David to build the temple, David's dream was realized on this day when Solomon dedicated the temple that he had built for his father, David. ***The Lord has performed His word:*** God had promised David that He would set one upon His throne. Solomon here expressed his gratitude that he was set upon the throne of David in fulfillment of the promise that God had made to David.

8:22-30 (2 Ch 6:21-42) Verses 22-53 are a prayer of Solomon concerning the obedience of the people. When reading the content of this prayer, the Bible interpreter must keep in mind that these are the words of Solomon that were recorded by the Holy Spirit. They are not the words of the Holy Spirit speaking to Himself. We must understand that what Solomon says, therefore, is to be understood from his understanding of the desires of God, which understanding is not necessarily in all areas the true desires of God. ***There is no God like you:*** The tragedy of Solomon's reign and theology is that he began with the faith of David, but by the time of the end of his reign, he had gone after the gods of his many wives. Though we could assume that he never gave up his belief in the one God of heaven as stated in this prayer, we must honor the Scriptures when it later states that he paid homage to the gods of other nations. In one generation, therefore, he went from what is stated here to belief in other gods, which gods were only the imagination of the minds of men. ***You will not lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel:*** This was a promise to David, that from David only would God recognize one as a rightful king in Israel. This promise to David was fulfilled until the cessation of Israelite kings in 586 B.C. when Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity. When a remnant of Israel returned from captivity in 536 B.C., the Israelites reverted back to God's original theocratic plan that He alone be their king. The theocracy of God began when He established a covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai after Israel came out of Egyptian captivity. The theocracy continued for approximately 400 years until the anointing of Saul. The monarchy continued from the time of Saul to the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C., approximately 400 years. The theocracy was reestablished after the captivity and continued for approximately 400 years until the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God. It is for this reason that many Bible students believe that the deliverance from Egyptian captivity was actually in the 13th century B.C., not the 15th century, or 1,445. ***But will God indeed dwell on earth:*** Solomon certainly knew that God was not confined to this earth and a temple that was made with the hands of men (See comments At 17:22-31). Only those gods who are created in the imagination of men are confined to buildings. The omnipresent God of all things is not relegated to sanctuaries that are the creation of architects. It is the spirit of idolatry for one to feel the presence of God as he goes into a sanctuary wherein he feels a great sense of God. The error of such emotions is that the same person feels he is away from God when he is outside the sanctuary. When our minds create a sense of the presence of God in a particular location, then we have started down the idolatrous road that moves us to build idol temples in which to house our gods and religious experience. Believers must keep in mind that the spirit of idolatry is to create a religion that appeals to the sense perceptions of man. We create mechanical music to appeal to our sense of hearing. We create idols we can feel to appeal to our sense of feeling. We build elaborate buildings to appeal to our sense of sight and for the presence of our god we believe lives in our building. ***My name will be there:*** The name, or authority of God, was manifested through the existence of the tabernacle, and now at this time, Solomon prayed that the temple function in the same manner. The temple was to be the evidence of the authority of God among His people of Israel. The problem with this reasoning was that the nations around Israel maintained the same belief, that their temples were the evidence of the presence of their gods.

8:31-53 (2 Ch 6:22-39) The context of the prayer here is in reference to the warnings that God gave to Moses in Deuteronomy. If they did not remain faithful to the word of God, they would pay the price of famine, pestilence, plagues and exile. Within the early reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, Israel would pay the price in reference to all the gold and silver that was part of the temple. Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt, would carry it away to Egypt. ***In this house:*** The condition that one be in the presence of the temple to swear an oath or repent could not be a condition for making binding oaths or bringing about personal repentance. The reason this could not be a condition for binding oaths was that the temple structure was a great distance away from most of the people of Israel. Therefore, one's personal presence at the temple was not stated as a law. We must conclude that Solomon was only seeking to exemplify the importance of the temple in making this statement. ***If they pray toward this place:*** We would not assume that this desire, which is mentioned four times in Solomon's prayer, is the desire of God. God does not prescribe any direction to which one must face when praying. These were the desires of Solomon, and thus could not be made a condition for answered prayer. God is omnipresent, and thus the answer to prayer is not conditioned on the posture of the individual during his prayer. When Mohammed initiated the faith of Islam, he took this concept of Solomon from these statements and made a legal code in Islam that in prayer all Muslims must pray while facing Mecca, not Jerusalem. In this context it seems that Solomon was urging the people to face Jerusalem

when they prayed in order to give honor and allegiance to the temple. He was requesting that the condition for answered prayer was based on the position of one's bowing toward Jerusalem when in prayer. This surely did not go well with those of the northern tribes, which later proved to be true. ***Hear in heaven Your dwelling place:*** The dwelling place of God is in a heavenly environment, not a specific physical location on earth as a building. ***A foreigner:*** Solomon's desire here was that the temple function as a center of reference for those who came from foreign countries. He was asking that the elaborate and lavish nature of the temple be an evidence of the presence of God to the alien. Unfortunately, the appeal of the temple did not accomplish this desire simply because the behavior of the people did not reflect obedience to the will of God. It was their ungodly behavior, not the temple, that eventually led to the blasphemy of the name of God. ***Wherever You will send them:*** This again is a reflection on what God warned Israel through Moses in reference to their obedience to the law of God. If they were disobedient, they would be taken into captivity. At this time in their history, the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia did not exist. But it would eventually be these kingdoms to which they would be taken in exile for their disobedience. ***There is no man that does not sin:*** See comments Rm 3:23; 1 Jn 1:10.

8:54-61 ***There has not failed one word of all His good promise:*** God had been true to His promises to Moses concerning the Israelites (See Gn 12:1-3). These promises had been fulfilled before this time, but Solomon wanted to remind the people that God had fulfilled His promises of the covenant. It was their responsibility to fulfill their responsibilities of the covenant by obedience to His will. ***Walk in all His ways:*** This was the condition of the covenant that was to be fulfilled by the people. ***That all the people of the earth may know:*** Israel's obedience to the commandments of God would be an evidence to the existence of God. Since their law came to them from God, their obedience to the law would manifest that it was not a law that had been invented after the desires of men. Idolatrous nations devised their own moral laws. Such laws are usually devised in order to satisfy the lusts of the flesh. However, Israel's law was God-given, and the proof that it was from God would be proved by the righteous nature of their lives.

8:62-66 (2 Ch 7:4-10) The elaborate dedication and sacrifice of animals was a renewal of Israel's commitment to God. In their consecration of the temple, they were making a commitment to be faithful to the will of God when they returned home. ***Entrance of Hamath:*** This was the northern region of Palestine between Mt. Hermon and Lebanon. ***River of Egypt:*** This was a small brook south of Gaza in the southern part of Palestine. ***Fourteen days:*** This would probably have been seven days in celebration of the feast of Dedication, plus another seven days in celebration of the feast of Tabernacles.

Chapter 9

GOD'S COVENANT WITH SOLOMON

9:1-9 (2 Ch 7:11-22) ***All Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do:*** Though the temple was built after the desire of David and Solomon, God put His stamp of approval on it, and thus the temple was consecrated with the presence of God (vs 3). ***But go and serve other gods and worship them:*** And this they did, being led by Solomon himself. Solomon was about twenty years into his reign when the temple was completed. He reigned forty years, and thus in the latter part of his reign after the completion of the temple and its dedication he was led astray after other gods by his foreign wives. ***Obey:*** This was the condition for the succession of Davidic kings who would follow after Solomon (See 8:24-26). The books of 1 & 2 Kings are a history of how the many of the kings of Israel led Israel astray after the sins of false gods. ***Will hiss:*** They would whistle in astonishment at the fall of Israel in reference to the grandeur of the temple. In fact, in the early years of Rehoboam's reign, the temple would be plundered of all its riches by Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt. That in which they took pride would be plundered.

SOLOMON'S FAME

9:10-14 (2 Ch 8:1,2) ***Cabul:*** As payment for the cedar and cypress trees from Hiram, king of Tyre, Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities. However, the land around the cities was unproductive, and thus Hiram named the land "Cabul," which means "worthless" or "nothing." 2 Chronicles states that at a later time Solomon regained possession of these undeveloped cities. They were evidently given to Hiram as security until he was paid in gold.

9:15-22 (2 Ch 8:3-10) ***Forced labor:*** These were those whom Solomon had brought into bondage to build both the temple and many other cities. We could conclude that they were Canaanites who were supposed to have been utterly destroyed when Israel initially came in to possess the land of Palestine. Instead of destroying the Canaanites and their culture, they were subjected as servants to the Israelites. ***Millo:*** Some have interpreted this to be a fortification that was built on a platform or citadel. It is not clear what this was, though the same was built in Bethshemesh and Lachish. ***Cities:*** The cities that are listed here are not all the cities that were built by Solomon. It was a general practice that his officers were given cities over which they ruled and in which they were to maintain storage facilities for the wealth of the nation. ***Pharaoh:*** This was the last Pharaoh of the 21st Dynasty of Egyptian kings. Solomon took Pharaoh's daughter as one of his wives in order to establish political ties with Egypt. ***Storage cities:*** Since a great amount of provisions was to be continually supplied to the court of Solomon, storage cities were set up throughout the land in order that grain be available to supply the king's court throughout the year. Archaeologists have discovered some of these storage facilities in Bethshemesh and Lachish. Remains of the stables of Solomon have been discovered in Megiddo and Hazor. ***Their children who were left:*** The descendants of the original Canaanites, who were to have been annihilated by the army of Joshua, were in the land at this time. They were subjected to the Israelites as servants (See Ja 9:22-27). The Israelites maintained the positions of authority, and the Canaanite descendants were the servants in the land.

9:23-28 ***Pharaoh's daughter:*** Once the temple complex

and the royal palace were completed, royalty moved in. ***Offerings:*** Once the temple was completed, Solomon no longer went to Gibeon to offer the three annual sacrifices of the feast of Unleavened Bread, feast of Weeks, and feast of Tabernacles (2 Ch 8:12-16). ***A fleet of ships:*** There is a brief mention in this context of a fleet of ships that was probably very substantial. The Phoenicians were very skilled in sea travel. Combined with the wealth of Solomon, we could assume that the influence of both Hiram and Solomon extended to regions far beyond the land of Palestine. The discovery of copper smelting furnaces as far south as the Gulf of Aqabah and Ezion Geber lead us to conclude that Solomon sourced metals from great distances. From Ezion Geber it is believed that Solomon set forth his ships on voyages to Ophir. It is not known exactly where Ophir was located, though some have suggested that it was as far south as the Somali coast in Africa.

Chapter 10
VISIT BY A QUEEN

10:1-10 (2 Ch 9:1-12) ***Queen of Sheba:*** The name "Sheba" probably refers to an area of southern Arabia, though some believe reference here was to regions as far south as southern Egypt or northern Ethiopia. ***Heard of the fame:*** The wealth and wisdom of Solomon was so great that his reputation was spread throughout the Near East. The report seemed too great to be true, and thus out of curiosity, the queen of Sheba made this trip to confirm what she had heard. ***The half was not told:*** The queen of Sheba discovered that the reports concerning Solomon's wealth and wisdom were not exaggerated. She was overwhelmed. The Holy Spirit had this record of Solomon's wisdom recorded to emphasize the fact that God blessed Solomon with the understanding that he requested in prayer at the beginning of his reign. He did not ask for wealth and fame. The wealth came only as he exercised his God-given wisdom, and thus God is given credit for his great wealth. Israel reached its greatest economic power and international influence at this time in history. From this time forward, however, the nation morally and economically declined to the point of being led away into captivity. When Jesus came into the world, Palestine was occupied by the Romans and the Israelites were subservient to their control. However, we must keep in mind that God used Israel's sin as a nation to take them from glory to gloom in order to humble them in preparation to receive His Son (See Gl 4:4). We must also keep in mind that God brought them to the greatness of Solomon's wealth and fame in order that in the future after their apostasy and captivity they would have something that would remind them from where they had fallen. ***Blessed be the Lord your God:*** The queen rightly concluded that Israel's greatness had come from God. In the future after the Israelites had fallen because of their sin, their remembrance of the glory days of Solomon would always be an encouragement that they repent in order to receive again the blessings that came from God.

10:11-13 ***All her desire:*** Not only did the queen of Sheba bless Solomon with gifts of precious stones, metals and spices, Solomon also gave gifts to her. He gave all that she asked. Since Solomon at this time had control of the surrounding nations that he had subjugated to the rule of Israel, the queen needed trade route privileges in order for her nation to trade with other nations. In her request to Solomon, therefore, we would assume that more than gifts were included.

SOLOMON'S TAX OF THE PEOPLE

10:14-20 ***Gold that came to Solomon:*** The tax that came to Solomon was enormous. The 666 talents of gold in modern value would have been several hundred million dollars every year. This amount was in conjunction with the taxes that came from the trade routes. ***Gold shields:*** There were two sizes of shields that were used by the royal bodyguards (14:27,28; 2 Ch 12:10). The larger shield, which protected the entire body, consumed 600 shekels of gold. The smaller shield was made with three minas of gold. ***House of the forest of Lebanon:*** This was a reference to the temple since it was constructed from the trees that came from Lebanon. ***Throne:*** The use of ivory indicates that Solomon's trade extended into Africa where elephants were hunted. Solomon's throne was elaborately decorated with royal symbols in gold and ivory. The beauty of the throne emphasized the authority of the king over the nation.

10:21-29 ***Silver:*** Since there was so much gold, there was little value in silver. ***Trading ships:*** Some translations have used the noun "Tarshish" to translate the Hebrew word here which actually means "refinery" or "smeltery." However, the term refers to the process of refining metals, not a geographical location (See 9:26-28). They were ships that carried refined metals, and thus, referred to as the trading ships that carried precious metals. ***Chariots and horsemen:*** See 4:26; 9:19. The accumulation of gold and horses by Solomon was a direct violation of God's instructions that were given in Deuteronomy 17:16,17. Thus Solomon's ignoring of the law indicated that during this period, the royalty had forgotten, or at least became ignorant of, the will of God in reference to the kings of Israel. Since the attention of the people had now turned from the leadership of the Levites to the material leadership of the king of Israel, the stage was set for the apostasy of Israel that would soon follow in their history. Instead of people looking to the Levites for decisions and directions from God by the Urim and Thummim in the priest's ephod, they were looking to the king. At this time in the history of Israel, the leadership of the monarchy had overshadowed any theocratic leadership by God. ***Made silver ... common:*** Silver was used so much in Jerusalem that it was as common as wood. And thus, the people outside Jerusalem went to Jerusalem as did the queen of Sheba. They were infatuated with the elaborate materials that were used in the building of the temple and royal palace. The greatness of Israel, therefore, turned from their godly behavior to material wealth. Instead of manifesting the greatness of God through their godly behavior, they sought to manifest God to the nations by their enormous wealth. Jerusalem became a tourist spectacle that was paraded before the world. The Israelites toured people through the structures of their elaborate buildings and took pride in their enormous wealth. Their pride in the physical revealed the misguided focus of their hearts. We must not

miss what the Holy Spirit is here telling us in these words. Israel's focus at this time in their history had turned from calling the world unto God through their obedience to His word, to being tour guides to the wealth of the nation. In order to maintain such an appearance in his own life, Solomon politically sustained his influence by catering to the foreign gods of his wives whom he had married for the purpose of maintaining his agreements with foreign nations and taxes from trade. ***Exceeded all the kings of the earth:*** This statement should be understood in the historical context of the ones to whom 1 Kings was originally written. Thus Solomon's wealth exceeded the wealth of all the kings that were known at the time Solomon lived. Reference, therefore, would be to the kings of the Near East, or kingdoms that were known by the Israelites at this time in their history. The writer wants us to understand that the great wealth of Solomon did not stop the apostasy that began with him and continued throughout Israel's history.

Chapter 11
SOLOMON'S APOSTASY & DEATH

11:1-8 The apostasy of Solomon reaffirms the fact that one's knowledge of God is not a guarantee that one will remain faithful to God. The legacy of his life also reminds us that the influence of an unconverted wife can lead one into compromises that eventually lead one away from God. The focus of Solomon on maintaining the wealth of the kingdom of Israel assuredly drove him to focus on respecting the gods of the nations from which his wealth came through trade agreements. The price he paid for having many foreign wives was his total loyalty to God. His polygamist marriages to these wives were not only contrary to the will of God, they influenced him to believe in other gods (Dt 17:17). ***His heart was not loyal to the Lord:*** Contrary to David, who never lost total focus on the one true and living God, Solomon conformed to the gods who had been created after the imagination of men, and to whom his wives paid allegiance. He turned from recognizing God as the one from whom all his blessings came. He turned to taking glory in his own skillful leadership to amass such great wealth through marriages and political maneuvers. His heart was not loyal to God in the sense that he added to his belief in God the gods of the foreign wives that he had married.

11:9-13 ***The Lord was angry with Solomon:*** We should have expected this. He violated too many principles of the law of God to remain faithful throughout his life. His punishment for his apostasy was not immediate. It would come through the termination of the united kingdom of Israel. Ten tribes would be removed from the kingdom of his son, Rehoboam. God allowed him to live the remainder of his life with the knowledge that his unwise actions would cause the division of the nation of Israel. We must keep in mind, therefore, that it was Solomon who set Israel on the path to captivity. He started the apostasy to idol religion and the kings of Israel after him simply followed his example. One of the reasons for the division of the tribes was because of his idolatrous practices that he introduced into Israel. Both the northern and southern kingdoms were eventually taken into captivity because they followed the idolatrous example of Solomon. ***One tribe:*** Throughout the Kings and Chronicles, as well as the prophets, a very important interpretation is connected to the phrase, "one tribe" in reference to Judah. When reading this term, or simply, "Judah," the Bible interpreter must always assume that the tribe of Benjamin is included in the southern kingdom of Judah. This interpretation is explained in 12:21 where the writer stated, "all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin." The northern kingdom of Israel consisted of ten tribes and the southern kingdom consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with part of the tribe of Simeon. ***For David my servant's sake:*** In order that the legacy of David continue, Solomon's son would reign over Judah and Benjamin.

11:14-22 God used the rebellious nature of other tribes in order to carry out His plan to take ten tribes away from the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. ***Hadad:*** Edom had, under the reign of David, been subdued by Joab who led David's army (2 Sm 8:13,14). However, during that siege by Joab, the young man Hadad fled to Egypt. According to verse 14, we must conclude that God had a hand in Hadad's return to Edom and his mustering of the Edomites against Solomon.

11:23-25 ***Rezon:*** Rezon had established himself in the far northern region of Palestine. It seems that he had organized a marauding group of bandits who continually harassed the Israelites who had also settled in the northern region of Palestine. Under the leadership of Rezon, Israel eventually lost control of the Syrian territory.

11:26-40 ***Jeroboam:*** In Israelite history from this point on, the influence of Jeroboam played a significant role. His legacy of idolatry eventually led to the captivity of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. ***The prophet Ahijah:*** Jeroboam's rise was through the work of God. While young, and as a very capable leader, Jeroboam found favor in the sight of Solomon. He oversaw all the forced labor of Solomon's kingdom. ***Lifted up his hand against the king:*** It seems that Jeroboam became somewhat arrogant when Ahijah informed him that he would reign over the northern ten tribes of Israel. He thus acted too soon to fulfill the prophecy and did not wait until the death of Solomon. The result was that he lost his favor in the sight of Solomon, and thus had to flee to Egypt. ***Ten pieces:*** The fact that ten tribes would be assigned to Jeroboam, indicates that by this time in the history of Israel, the people felt the burden of the tremendous taxes that were levied by Solomon to maintain the glory of his kingdom reign. We must also conclude that the northern tribes felt slighted by the centralization of government in Jerusalem and the locating of the ark of God in the temple in Jerusalem. The rebellion would be from the vast majority of the nation. Only two tribes would remain with Rehoboam, Judah and Benjamin. ***They have forsaken Me:*** The primary reason why Israel was divided, and eventually was taken into captivity, was because they followed after the example of Solomon in his idolatry, and not after David in keeping the commandments of the Lord. ***A light always before Me:*** The righteous influence by which David manifested the heart of God to Israel made it possible that the seedline promise that was made to David would bring about the promise that was given to Abraham (Gn

12:1-3). The house of David had to continue throughout the history of Israel, for from his seed would eventually come the Messiah into the world (Compare 15:4; 2 Kg 8:19; 2 Ch 21:7 with 2 Sm 21:17). God had promised David that his house would stand forever (2 Sm 7:16). In this prophecy was the redeeming Son of David, the Christ. Though the house of David would be affected with Babylonian captivity, a remnant would return in order to carry on the seedline promise that was made to Abraham, and narrowed to the descendants of David. ***Build you a sure house as I did for David:*** This must be understood in the context of God's use of the nation of Israel to bring the Messiah into the world. The northern tribes would continue to exist until the time when their separation from Judah and Benjamin was fulfilled. The purpose for their separation was fulfilled when God called the remnant of Israel out of Babylonian captivity. A remnant of all twelve tribes returned to Israel after the Babylonian captivity, which took place with the return of the initial captives in 536 B.C. By the time the Son of God was born into Israel, representatives of all twelve tribes of Israel were in Palestine for the fulfillment of all God's promises concerning the coming of the Redeemer of Israel (See comments Gl 4:4).

11:41-43 The inspired writer does not give us any information concerning the death of Solomon who had devoted himself to building a financial empire out of Israel. It is simply stated that he died and that he had reigned 40 years. Some have suggested that he repented in his old age from his idolatrous behavior. When reading his proverbs and wisdom literature, this could have been so. However, the legacy of following after the idolatry of his wives set a behavioral pattern that stayed with Israel until the days of Israel's captivity in 586 B.C. There is no indication in 1 Kings that Solomon repented of his idolatrous apostasy. Nevertheless, God used him as an inspired writer to compose the wisdom literature that we have in the Bible. Inspiration by the Holy Spirit did not mean that the Holy Spirit took control of the moral behavior of the one He inspired (See Gl 2:11-16) ***Rehoboam his son reigned:*** This reign over the united Israel was short-lived. He followed in the harshness of his father, and thus set the stage for the division of the nation of Israel which came shortly after he assumed the throne in Jerusalem.

Division Of Israel
(12:1 – 16:34)

Outline: (1) Rehoboam's folly and Israel's revolt (12:1-24), (2) Jeroboam's northern leadership (12:25 – 14:20), (3) Rehoboam's reign and death (14:21-31), (4) The house of David in Jerusalem (15:1-24), (5) Rule of Nadab (15:25-32), (6) Reign of Baasha (15:33 – 16:7), (7) Rule of Elah (16:8-14), (8) Insurrection of Zimri (16:15-20), (9) Reign of Omri (16:21-28), (10) Reign of Ahab (16:29-34)

Chapter 12
REHOBOAM'S FOLLY & ISRAEL'S REVOLT

12:1-5 It seems that Rehoboam went to Shechem north of Jerusalem in order to accommodate those of the north who came down for this very crucial meeting. Jeroboam, who had been in Egypt, had possibly laid the ground work for the meeting, knowing that he had been designated by Ahijah the prophet to reign over the northern ten tribes. He thus appeared with Israel at the meeting with a known agenda. ***Grievous service:*** During the last years of Solomon's reign, it is evident that the people lived under the burden of Solomon's overbearing taxation. The northern tribes had a valid complaint since most of the tax money was gathered from the northern tribes but was spent primarily in Judah and Jerusalem, not the northern territories.

12:6-15 ***The old men:*** These were men who stood before Solomon. In view of the complaint of the people, it is evident that their wishes were not heard when Solomon was still alive. Solomon seemingly ruled with an autocratic attitude, refusing also to listen to the counsel of "old men" who stood before him. ***The young men:*** These men had a tyrannical attitude toward the people. They were those who were spoiled by the lavish living of the king's court, and thus did not want to give up their life-style. As is common with autocratic leaders, they lived in their own world that was out of touch with the common people over whom they assumed dictatorial control. Rehoboam's decision was to rule autocratically after his father in order to maintain his kingly life-style. In order to do this he had to oppress the people with more taxation. This one selfish decision brought to the surface all the divisive tension that had built up between the tribes for many years. It was the final divisive act that separated the nation. The legacy of Rehoboam was that he was more concerned over his own well being than the people over whom he ruled.

12:16-20 ***What portion have we in David:*** If they were to be burdened with greater taxation that would go only to the house of David in Jerusalem, then the northern tribes felt that they could not be loyal to any descendant of David as king over them. As a result, Rehoboam's reign was reduced to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. ***Adoram:*** In an effort to restore his reign over the northern tribes, Rehoboam sent Adoram to the north in order to bring into subjection the forced labor that lived there. But he was stoned, and thus the northern tribes sealed their rebellion and separation from Judah and Rehoboam. ***Israel rebelled ... to this day:*** At the time of the writing of 1 & 2 Kings, the kingdom was still divided, but had not yet experienced the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C.

12:21-24 ***Judah ... Benjamin:*** When the term "Judah" is used hereafter in Jewish history, one must always include the tribe of Benjamin that was assimilated into Judah. Since the territory of Simeon was divided between the north and south, much of the tribe of Simeon was also assimilated into Judah. In the writing of the prophets, the term "Judah" referred to the southern kingdom and the term "Israel" referred to the northern ten tribes. ***The word of God came to Shemaiah:*** This word that came from God was that Rehoboam give up his plans to subjugate the northern tribes. The division of the tribes was the work of God, and thus Rehoboam was assured through Shemaiah that his plans would fail if he sought to reunite Israel against the will of God. ***Remnant:*** These were those of the northern tribes who were living in the south at the time of the division of Israel. Not everyone in the north rebelled against God.

JEROBOAM'S NORTHERN LEADERSHIP

12:25-33 ***Shechem:*** This was Jeroboam's capital during his reign, though the capital was later moved to Tirzah (14:17). At the time he established Shechem as his initial capital, he added to the buildings that already existed, for the city existed long before Jeroboam (12:1; Ja 24:1). Omri later reaffirmed Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom (16:24). ***Penuel:*** Jeroboam also fortified this city that existed long before his time (Gn 32:24-32; Jg 8:8,9,17). ***If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem:*** Something very significant happened at this time in reference to Israel violating a fundamental plan of God to keep Israel as a united nation throughout their history. The tabernacle was to be used as the center for their burnt offerings throughout their history. For this reason God gave them detailed instructions in the Pentateuch as to how they were to continually repair or rebuild the tabernacle throughout their history until the Messiah came. However, they failed to do this, and thus the center of sacrifices was claimed by various tribes as the tabernacle remained too long in any one territory. God never intended that Israel centralize the place where they would go to offer the burnt offerings, and thus no tribe would ever be too far away every year (See comments Dt 12). But when Jerusalem was made the capital, and the temple was built to centralize sacrifices in Jerusalem, then the foundation was laid for the division of the nation. Building the temple in Jerusalem consigned the northern tribes to being continually too far away to go and offer their burnt offerings before the Lord. At the time of the division, centralization of the sacrifices had been going on since the completion of the temple. The northern tribes were consigned to being too far away to bring their families for the burnt offering. The resentment of the north toward the south grew, and the foundation was laid for division. Jeroboam simply took advantage of this situation. ***It is too far for you to go up to Jerusalem:*** And it was. For this reason Jeroboam went too far from the law of God by building an altar in Dan (or, Laish - Jg 18:24-31) and another in Bethel (or, Luz - Gn 28:10-21; 35:5-15). He thus kept the people away from Jerusalem and away from the ark of the covenant that was permanently located in the temple. He simply accommodated the northern tribes in the fact that it was too far for them to go on an annual basis to offer their burnt offerings before the Lord in Jerusalem. The centralization of government around a king, and the administration of government in one capital where their faith was also centralized, eventually bore the fruit of division among the tribes of Israel. We could blame the division of the kingdom on the harshness of Rehoboam. However, the division had already started to take place years before when Israel rejected God in order to have a king on earth. The kings on earth eventually centralized the administration of the nation's affairs around a single capital where they built a temple after the nations around them. The division was inevitable. God saw their future, and thus worked to use what the people caused to His own advantage. ***Jeroboam ordained:*** Jeroboam established many religious practices that were after his own design. He restructured the religious beliefs of the people, who at this time, were ignorant of the word of God, for they had no copies of the law by which to direct their lives (See Hs 4:6). He thus made the people sin by offering them the opportunity to satisfy their religious desires according to his desires to maintain the loyalty of the people. What Jeroboam established as religious behavior was continued throughout the remainder of the history of the northern kingdom. The kings that followed him thus sinned by carrying on the tradition of his apostasy. ***Feast:*** Reference here was to a change in the time for celebrating the feast of Tabernacles. These were times of change, but it was change away from the will of God.

Chapter 13

13:1-10 ***A man of God:*** God did not speak directly to the king. He spoke through His prophets, and in this case as others, we would assume that the man of God was a Levite. Since the judgment that was coming from God on the house of Jeroboam was severe, a special messenger from God was sent to bear the message to the king. ***Against the altar:*** Jeroboam had gone beyond what God sanctioned when He gave him kingship over the northern ten tribes of Israel. In the division, God simply wanted to relieve Israel of the great financial burden that the house of Solomon had placed on the people. But Jeroboam took the move as justification to change the law of God. He thus built two more centers for sacrifices, one in Bethel and the other in Dan. ***Josiah:*** This was indeed a prophecy, not a prediction. The person's name is given, which when he came would leave no doubt that God was working through Josiah to bring down the apostasy of Israel (See 2 Kg 23:17,18). ***I will give you a reward:*** This prophet was not going to sell out for a salary. Though not recorded, he had been given strict instructions by God not to receive pay for his work as a prophet on this occasion. If he received pay from the one, or ones, to whom he was to give a message of judgment from God, then he would have been tempted to change the message. Those preachers who are supported by a local group of God's people are always tempted to preach that which they believe the people want to hear (See comments 2 Tm 4:3). One often loses his freedom to teach what must be said from the word of God when he is supported by those who listen to his lessons (See comments 1 Co 9:19-23).

13:11-19 ***An old prophet in Bethel:*** This may have been a prophet who went along with the apostasy of Jeroboam, being paid by Jeroboam to lead others into the apostasy. His lie may thus have been an effort to discredit the message of the man of God. However, because the text describes the prophet as old, it may have been that he was too old to resist the apostasy of Jeroboam, since Jeroboam recruited the lowest of the people to be his prophets (vs 32). In this case, the old prophet may have lied in desperation just to have the man of God in his presence for encouragement. Unfortunately, his lie cost the life of a fearless man of God who came out of Judah to condemn the apostasy of Jeroboam.

13:20-32 One lesson is very clear in this example. Though the man of God was innocent in believing the lie of the old prophet, he had to pay the price for his disobedience. He should have perceived that the old prophet was lying, for the

lie was contrary to what God had already clearly said to him, that he not tarry in Bethel, but immediately return to his home. For a moment he forgot the instructions of God, and thus paid with his life. ***The lion standing by the carcass:*** This action on the part of the lion was proof that God was working in this situation. Normally, the lion would have eaten the carcass. But instead of eating the carcass, the lion was standing on guard that the carcass not be eaten by any other animal. The lion was under the control of God.

13:33,34 In order to propagate his religious beliefs and behavior, Jeroboam hired those who would preach his message. The lowest of the people who were looking for a job, sold themselves out to one who used the religious inclinations of the people to maintain his own political position. Those who were hired likewise used the religious inclinations of the people to get a job. Governments that put preachers on the payroll have doomed the faiths of the people of the nation to apostasy. There must always be a separation between church and state, lest the state, as did Jeroboam, use religion to lead the people against the will of God.

Chapter 14

14:1-20 ***Go to ... Ahijah:*** When times got tough, Jeroboam knew where there was a true prophet of God. ***Shiloh:*** This may have been a city in which prophets lived at the time (See 2 Kg 2). ***Take with you seven loaves:*** When one went to a prophet, he was to take food that would be given to the prophet. Not only was this the will of God, but a way of showing respect for the prophet. Those who bring no sustenance to the men of God have no consideration or respect for those who have given their lives to teach the word of God (See comments 1 Co 9:1-14). ***Ahijah could not see:*** Because Ahijah immediately addressed the wife of Jeroboam as his wife, Ahijah was confirmed by miracle that he was a prophet of God. This confirmation assumed that she should accept every word he said. And the word was not good. The child would die as soon as she stepped foot in the city upon her return. It may have been that she did not fully believe the message of Ahijah, for she did return to the city. If she had believed every word, then as the mother of the child, she surely would never have returned to the city. Nevertheless, her love for the child outweighed her belief in what the prophet said. ***Cast Me behind your back:*** For political reasons, Jeroboam assumed the religious leadership of the people. He did this by building the altars for sacrifice in Bethel and Dan, and by hiring a clergy to maintain his apostate religion. Thus in order to maintain his political position, he had to lead the people away from devotion to the commandments of God. He did this by hiring those who would speak his message. As long as there are those who will preach for a salary, there will always be those for hire who will propagate the message of those who pay them. ***Take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam:*** Abijah, the son of Jeroboam would die, and thus the kingship lineage of Jeroboam would cease. God would eventually raise up one who would cut off the house of Jeroboam from being kings. The curse of Jeroboam's house went beyond the death of Abijah. Other than Abijah, none of Jeroboam's descendants would go to the grave in a dignified manner. Upon their death, they would be eaten by animals and birds. ***Scatter them beyond the River:*** This was a clear prophecy of the Assyrian captivity that took place in 722/21 B.C. Assyria conquered the northern kingdom and took the ten tribes into captivity beyond the Euphrates River. ***Jeroboam ... made Israel sin:*** Herein is the power of example that is in the hand of the leaders of nations. Each individual citizen is responsible for his own sin. Nevertheless, the leadership of a nation sets and maintains the social environment for the people to follow. The people of a nation will not rise above the spiritual example of their leaders. Remnants will remain faithful, but the majority will succumb to the evil influence of the national leaders. National leaders make their people sin when they lead a life of sin. The legacy of Jeroboam was contrary to the commandments of God. He ruined a nation because of his own sinful leadership. He maintained his rebellion against the commandments of God by hiring a clergy who would preach his message to the people. ***Book of the chronicles of the kings:*** Throughout 1 & 2 Kings reference is made to this uninspired record of the kings of Israel. The writer had access to this book when writing the inspired record of 1 & 2 Kings. The books of 1 & 2 Kings are written with focus on the history of Israel, whereas the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles are written to focus on the history of the southern kingdom. In both accounts of inspired history, reference is made to the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

REHOBOAM'S REIGN & DEATH

14:21-24 (2 Ch 11:5 – 12:8) Rehoboam reigned in Judah from 931 to 913 B.C. The account of Rehoboam's reign is given in greater detail in 2 Chronicles. One important fact that is given in Chronicles was that there was a great flight of priests to the south away from the northern apostasy of Jeroboam that happened at this time. Many Levites in the north did not go along with the apostasy of Jeroboam. They subsequently came to Judah, possibly in flight from the apostate false priests that Jeroboam set up to maintain his hijacking of the faith of Israel. There was also war between Israel and Judah throughout the reigns of Jeroboam and Rehoboam, which at one time almost led to the destruction of Jerusalem. But because the leaders of the south repented, Jerusalem was spared. ***Judah did evil:*** As with Jeroboam in the northern kingdom, so did Rehoboam in the south. Not only did the northern tribes build altars to gods they had created after their own imagination, so also did the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin. ***Above all that their fathers had done:*** This statement in reference to the people of Israel indicates the progression of apostasy. Though there were occasional restorations throughout their history, the society as a whole continued on a downward spiral to the point that the people became polytheistic, and in some cases, possibly agnostic in reference to the existence of God. ***Sodomites in the land:*** The Bible student must keep in mind that from the time of the reign of Solomon until the captivities of Assyria and Babylonia, all the tribes of Israel were in apostasy. The religious influence of the peoples that were originally to be eradicated from the land of promise

had by the time of Solomon exerted great social influence on the beliefs of the Israelites. The influence was extensive that the social and religious environment of Israel had to a treat extent turned away from God by the time of Solomon. This state of progressive apostasy continued until the captivities of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. There would be brief times of restoration during the days of kings as Josiah and Hezekiah, but generally, the apostasy could not be stopped. The exile of all Israel was inevitable.

14:25-31 ***Shishak king of Egypt:*** This would be Sheshonk who reigned in Egypt from 945-924 B.C. It is archaeologically significant that he left in Egypt an account of his raid into Palestine on the wall of the Karnak Temple in Luxor, Egypt. While Jeroboam was a fugitive in Egypt during the reign of Shishak, he evidently told the king of Egypt of the vast amounts of gold in the temple of Jerusalem. When Israel divided, war broke out between the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel (Compare 2 Ch 12:7,8). Judah was left vulnerable for an easy assault by the Egyptians. ***He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord:*** This answers the question as to what happened to all the gold of the temple (See 10:16,17). The irony of history in this case is intriguing. All the riches that Solomon accumulated in Jerusalem to secure the future of Israel, were taken away within one generation, and before the death of his son, Rehoboam. We would assume that Shishak stripped the royal palace and the temple of every article of gold, and possibly the ark of the covenant. It was a time for payback. When Israel left Egypt about 500 years before in their flight from the bondage of captivity, they plundered the wealth of Egypt. Some of the gold that was taken at that time surely made its way back to Egypt in this plundering of Judah by Shishak. Because Israel cried out in captivity for deliverance from Egyptian captivity 500 years before this event, they were blessed with the riches of Egypt. Because they fell into apostasy from God under the reign of Rehoboam, God gave the gold back to Egypt. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. We thus keep in mind that with the raid of Shishak all the wealth of the southern kingdom that was accumulated by Solomon was gone within five years of his death. Solomon confirmed that which he preached, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Ec 1:2).

Chapter 15

THE HOUSE OF DAVID IN JERUSALEM

15:1-8 (2 Ch 13:1-22) ***Abijam:*** He reigned from 913-911 B.C. This is the older form of the name for Abijah that occurs in 2 Chronicles. Abijam continued the idolatry of Rehoboam. Since the people were satisfied with religious behavior that they invented after their own desires, Abijam simply went along with the wishes of the people. He was not a religious reformer, but only a king who sought to please the wishes of the people. ***A lamp in Jerusalem:*** For the sake of David, the son of Abijam was given the right by God to continue the kingship heritage of Abijam as king in Jerusalem. ***There was war:*** That which left both the northern and southern kingdoms vulnerable to outside attack was that which prevailed throughout the early division of Israel. They continued in war with one another, fellow Israelite against fellow Israelite. By this time in their history, therefore, the Israelites had evidently lost their historical identity as the united Israel of God. Their social and economic adherence to the gods of the nations around them brought them to a time in their history that they had no allegiance to one another as fellow Israelites.

15:9-15 (2 Ch 14:1 – 16:14) ***Asa:*** He reigned from 911-870 B.C. ***Right in the eyes of the Lord:*** Asa was given a long reign by the Lord because of his obedience to the Lord in rejecting idolatry in Judah. However, because of his political insecurity, he made an unwise alliance with Syria (2 Ch 16:7-12). The extent of his religious reforms was revealed in the fact that he removed from high political office his mother who had the gall of making an image to the Canaanite goddess Asherah and placing it in the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem.

15:16-22 ***War:*** The division between Judah and Israel was sealed when war prevailed (See 2 Ch 16:1-6). Animosity between the two nations would not allow them to be one nation under God. Only God, who worked through their captivities, could bring them together again. ***Ben-hadad:*** He was the son of Hezion, or Rezon, who was an adversary of Solomon (11:23-25). This would be Ben-hadad I, whereas the Ben-hadad who lived during the time of Elijah and Elisha was Ben-hadad II, though some Bible interpreters make a strong case that there was only one Ben-hadad. ***Ramah:*** It is probable that Baasha, the northern king, built this city north of Jerusalem in order to form a blockade to any trade that might go between Judah and the countries of the north. ***A league between me and you:*** In order to break the league between Baasha and Syria, Asa sacrificed the remainder of the riches of the temple in order to establish an alliance with Ben-hadad of Syria. Ben-hadad accepted the payment and then broke his alliance with Israel. He not only broke his alliance with Israel, he led his armies against Israel in 879 B.C. This turned the attention of Baasha toward defending his northern borders, and thus Judah was given relief from the aggression of her northern brothers. When this happened, Asa tore down Ramah and used the materials to construct other cities. The actions of Asa in making alliances with foreign powers established a foreign policy that was contrary to the will of God. Instead of trusting in God for leadership and protection, the Israelites placed their trust in foreign powers. Beginning with this alliance, the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel began a succession of political alliances with foreign nations that continued throughout their history.

RULE OF NADAB

15:23-32 Asa's reign extended beyond the reign of Nadab, the king of the northern kingdom. In the record here, the writer of Kings goes back to give a brief record of Nadab's reign and a history of the northern kingdom. In the history, Nadad continued in the sins of his father, Jeroboam. This legacy would be common with the kings of the north. Nadab's short reign from 910-909 B.C. was filled with the continuation of the ways of his father. By this time in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, idolatry was a part of the culture of the Israelites. The kings were credited with leading the people

into idolatry, but the fact was that the kings conformed to the wishes of the people. Nevertheless, because the kings could have turned the people from their idolatry by taking a strong stand against idolatry, they were held accountable for the idolatrous state of the people. Leaders who lead must go against the wishes of the people if the people persist in sin. ***He killed all the house of Jeroboam:*** This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of 14:10, and thus the termination of the house of Jeroboam as kings in Israel.

REIGN OF BAASHA

15:33,34 Baasha reigned from 909-886 B.C. Though his reign showed promise at the beginning, he too conformed to the wishes of the people by condoning their idolatrous worship.

Chapter 16

16:1-7 ***Prince:*** God addressed Baasha as a "prince," not a king. A prince was not the final authority in any kingdom. Because God had worked to bring Baasha to the throne, God was the final authority. And because Baasha led the people to follow after the imagination of their own minds (idolatry), he was to be removed from the throne. Baasha's house would suffer the same fate as Jeroboam's house because he did not turn the people to God away from idolatry.

RULE OF ELAH

16:8-14 ***Drinking himself drunk:*** The Bible interpreter must keep in mind that the leadership of Israel during these years was morally corrupt. There was no true spiritual leadership in Israel since the days of David. For this reason, one must not be misled into thinking that God condoned behavior as that which was here manifested in the life of Elah and Zimri. Israel was a morally degraded society that continued to exist throughout these years only because of a remnant of righteous people within the society who had not bowed themselves to idolatrous gods. The Kings and Chronicles only give us the historical picture of the morally corrupt leadership of Israel after David, not an account of the righteous few who remained faithful to God. We must keep in mind that God sustained the corrupt leaders of Israel at this time in history only for the purpose of maintaining a government under which a small morally righteous remnant could live by faith in God and in hope of the Messiah to come (See 19:18). ***According to the word of God:*** God foreknew the end of those who chose to live degraded lives. He knew the whirlwind one would reap if he sowed to the wind. Because God foreknows does not mean that He predestines to happen that which He foreknows.

INSURRECTION OF ZIMRI

16:15-20 In response to the conspiracy of Zimri, the people, who did not want him as their king, made Omri king. We must keep in mind that these kings of Israel were chosen by the people. They were not made kings by the anointing of God. At this time in the history of Israel the people had long forgotten God as their king, and the fact that He only was to anoint the kings of Israel. The concept of the monarchy of Israel had developed to the point of being void of any concept that God ruled through anointed kings. For his sins: Zimri did not have the support of the people. When Omri defeated Zimri's weak army of men at Tirzah, he committed suicide by burning himself to death when he set the king's house alight.

REIGN OF OMRI

16:21-28 Omri, who reigned from 885-874 B.C., consolidated the kingship of the northern kingdom after a period of turmoil among evil kings. He was one of the most internationally influential kings of Israel. In archaeological discoveries of the records of Shalmaneser III and Sargon II, kings of Assyria, mention is made of the kings of Israel to be of the "house of Omri." At the time Omri became king, the northern kingdom was divided between those who gave allegiance to Tibni and those who followed Omri. Omri prevailed in the conflict, and thus brought some stability to the kingdom. Omri subsequently moved the capital of Israel from Tirzah to Samaria. By doing this He established Samaria as the center of government and faith in the northern kingdom. ***By their idols:*** Total dedication to God cannot exist in a society that has given itself over to idolatry. Idolatry is the desire of men to follow after their own imaginations in reference to religion. One first desires to follow after his own behavior, which desire is then sanctioned by the creation of a god in one's mind that condones the behavior. The idolater, therefore, takes his focus off God and places it on himself as the authority of his religious beliefs and behavior. Israel went into apostasy because the majority of the people sought to determine their own behavior. They thus chose leadership that would sanction their own evil practices.

REIGN OF AHAB

16:29-34 ***Ahab:*** From 874 to 853 B.C., Ahab's reign in the northern kingdom exemplified the evil by which the kings socially functioned in reference to the people. The previous records of the kings to this point in the history of the north focused on their political struggles among themselves. With the reign of Ahab, the inspired writer wants us to understand how evil the kings were in their relationship with the people over whom they reigned. It was during this time also that those who worshiped Baal were about to dismiss any worship of God from the societies of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. At the time, the kings of both kingdoms had adopted Baal worship, and thus the righteous few were intimidated to go into hiding with their faith. False Baal prophets were hired by the government to impose submission to Baal, and thus the true prophets of God were also intimidated. It was a time for giants in the faith to step forward in order to encourage the righteous few that God was still in control. It was a time, therefore, that the two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, had to lead the faithful few to stand fast in their faith. ***Ahab ... Jezebel:*** The king and queen of the northern kingdom led in the apostasy to take the people of Israel further into following after their own lusts. ***A light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam:*** The "sins of Jeroboam" had become the culture of the people. Their conscience was seared by the commonal-

ity of their behavior. In this social state, therefore, Israel was doomed to fulfill all those prophecies where God said that they would be led into captivity because of their sins. We must also keep in mind that throughout this time the prophets of Israel began their ministry to cry out to the people, warning of the impending exile that was coming on the northern kingdom. ***Hiel ... built Jericho:*** The rebuilding of this city was prophesied by Joshua (Ja 6:26). However, Joshua also prophesied that the rebuilding would come with consequences. It cost the lives of the two sons of Hiel. This was the fulfillment of a prophecy that was made over 500 years before. When God says that something will happen, the passing of time does not lessen the certainty of the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Ministry Of Elijah
(17:1 – 22:53)

Outline: (1) Drought in the north (17:1-24), (2) Contest on Mt. Carmel (18:1-46), (3) Elijah flees to Horeb (19:1-21), (4) Victory over Syria (20:1-43), (5) Naboth's vineyard (21:1-29), (6) Ahab's death (22:1-40), (7) Reign of Jehoshaphat (22:41-50), (8) Reign of Ahaziah (22:51-53)

Chapter 17
DROUGHT IN THE NORTH

17:1-7 ***Elijah:*** This was a time in Israel when God had to work miraculously through the faith of a great man. The fact that Elijah at this time came to the forefront in the history of Israel is evidence of the fact that there were true prophets of God working among the people, but were often intimidated by the government sanctioned false prophets who had been set up by Ahab and Jezebel. ***Elijah ... said:*** From James 5:17 we learn that the drought was the request of Elijah (See comments Js 5:17). It was Elijah, therefore, who took the initiative to stand against the evils of Ahab and prepare the northern kingdom for the judgment of God. The drought prepared the way for the confrontation between the false prophets of Baal and Elijah who represented God. Before the confrontation on Mt. Carmel, God first hid Elijah for some time in the wilderness by the Brook Cherith, and then in the house of the widow of Zarephath.

17:8-16 It is significant that the widow, in her state of poverty, was willing to take care of the man of God. She was a willing believer, though she had no hope of recovering from her destitution. When one takes care of a man of God, he is showing respect and worship to God. ***The barrel of meal was not exhausted:*** We are reminded of the event when Jesus fed both the 4,000 and 5,000 from a few fish and loaves. This was a miracle of creation, and only God can create (See comments Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39).

17:17-24 ***See, your son lives:*** This account of a resurrection of the dead reaffirms the fact that God has power over death. The record of this resurrection established the basis upon which the righteous could believe that Lazarus, and then Jesus, were actually raised from the dead. Though at this time this was a private event known only to Elijah and the mother, it was recorded later in order to prepare the minds of those who walked by faith to believe that God would cause His Son to be raised for the hope of the world.

Chapter 18
CONTEST ON MT. CARMEL

18:1-6 ***Show yourself to Ahab:*** The drought had been in the land for three years, and now it was time for Elijah to face Ahab. The drought had prepared the minds of the people for a significant miracle of God and the execution of 450 false preachers. ***Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord:*** The true prophets of God worked underground. Only the state supported false prophets were allowed to religiously lead the people. It was a social environment in which evil religious leaders prevailed over the righteous leaders of God. As a representative of the spiritual leadership of God, Elijah took his stand with God, and thus God stood by him in his time of fear that would come. ***Obadiah:*** Obadiah, a servant of Ahab who had saved 100 true prophets of God by hiding them in a cave, was looking for grass in order to save the domestic animals of Ahab from starvation. When studying the history of the wicked leadership of kings and prophets in the Kings and Chronicles, we must not forget that there were those who quietly maintained their faith in God and carried on with their lives.

18:7-16 ***Is it you, Elijah, my master:*** The answer to Obadiah's question was that Elijah was his master. The question reveals that Obadiah was a righteous person, and thus accepted Elijah as a spiritual leader in Israel. Obadiah's reluctance to go before Ahab indicates that he secretly maintained his faith in God alone while rejecting the idolatrous worship of Baal that was promoted by Ahab, Jezebel and their contingency of false preachers.

18:17-19 ***Are you he who troubles Israel:*** Elijah troubled Israel because Israel had turned from the commandments of God. The one who causes the trouble, therefore, is sometimes the one who is standing for that which is right. When men do not take a stand for that which is right, evil will rule. True leaders for God will take a stand for what is right even though it causes trouble among the people. ***I have not troubled Israel:*** The unrepentant Ahab who rebelled against God was the real spiritual troubler of Israel. His refusal to recognize the sin of his behavior moved him to accuse as a troubler in society the prophet who sought to turn the people away from the prophets of Baal.

18:20-24 It could have been that Mt. Carmel was a special location for Baal worship, since it is a range of high hills. Whatever the case, it offered the ideal location for a contest between God and the imaginations of the Baal prophets. What Elijah here proposed was a challenge to those who have created a belief after their own desires. This was to be a contest between God and man. Idolatry is simply men following after their own desires. This contest, therefore, was between God and those who desired to follow after their own religious inventions. What transpired in this event was for the purpose of the people, not the prophets. Elijah took the offensive in offering the false prophets an opportunity to prove themselves before the people. Once they failed, then Elijah took another offensive opportunity to kill all the false prophets.

18:25-29 ***Elijah mocked them:*** We can be assured that the taunting of Elijah intensified the emotions of the false

prophets. In their frustration they went into a frenzy of self-imposed hysteria. Religious groups throughout the world involve themselves in such assemblies of uncontrolled hysteria. This uncontrolled emotionalism deceives one into thinking that he is "spiritual." But actually, it is the result of misguided religionists who have given themselves over to their own self deception. The uncontrolled emotional frenzy of the Baal prophets that was manifested on this occasion is too often the nature of those who allow themselves to be carried away by their own emotions. As in this case, God does not answer those who call out of a state of irrational hysteria. He does answer those who conduct themselves soberly before Him (See comments Cl 2:20-23).

18:30-40 ***He repaired the altar of the Lord:*** In the days of Solomon, Solomon allowed worship of God on the formerly Canaanite high places of Israel. Instead of destroying these altars that were used for worship of false Canaanite gods, Solomon initially used them for sacrifices to God. This appears to have been one of those altars which Elijah repaired on Mt. Carmel. The altar could have been an altar that was used by those who maintained their faith in God, but were driven underground by the persecution of Ahab. ***Twelve stones:*** God still considered Israel to be a nation of twelve tribes. ***Water-pots:*** Elijah did not want anyone to believe that what was about to happen was the result of his own invention, or a spark that might ignite the wood of the altar. It took some time in order to apply this great amount of water to the wood and pour it into the trench that surrounded the altar. ***Turned their heart back again:*** This was the reason for the contest on Carmel. It was a time for restoration. And in order to generate a paradigm shift of restoration, drastic measures had to be taken. These measures were about to happen. ***Fell on their faces:*** The first drastic measure to affect a restoration on this occasion began by God giving an overwhelming manifestation that He was with His prophet. The fire that fell from heaven that consumed the altar and all that was on it, terrified the unbelievers who were present. Their terror prepared them to obey the command of Elijah to carry out the execution of the false prophets. ***He killed them there:*** The second drastic measure that was necessary in order to continue the restoration of Israel was the termination of those who had maintained the lies of a religion that was created after the sensual lusts of man. As the leader of the prophets of God, Elijah had all the prophets of Baal executed.

18:41-46 As in most false religions of ancient peoples, the gods were supposedly in control of the rains that brought life to the crops. In the case of Baal, it was believed that Baal also controlled the weather in order to bless his subjects. Elijah's call for the drought, therefore, was a direct attack against those who were self-deceived in believing that Baal controlled the weather (17:1; Js 5:17). In this case, Elijah prayed again and the rains came, reaffirming that the God in which he believed actually controlled the rains.

Chapter 19
ELIJAH FLEES TO HOREB

19:1-8 ***Ahab told Jezebel:*** It seems that Jezebel was a dominant personality over Ahab. Ahab thus ran to Jezebel, telling her that Elijah had killed her prophets of Baal. When she heard the report, she determined to kill Elijah. The miracle of Carmel did not move her to repent. It only made her angry, and then she moved to take her anger out on Elijah. ***Ran for his life:*** It would appear that Elijah felt that he alone stood against the wrath of Jezebel, not knowing that there were yet 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal (19:18). He thus took flight for several days, fleeing to Beersheba in the southern part of Palestine. ***Take away my life:*** Elijah was depressed. He was physically exhausted. In his exhaustion, he spoke in contradictory terms. He had fled for his life, and yet he was complaining to God to take his life. ***To Horeb:*** It was a 40-day walk to Mt. Sinai, a place where Elijah needed to connect again with God. When God uses great men for great movements, He takes them into the desert. He did the same with Moses, Jesus and Paul, and now Elijah needed to experience the tranquility that only a desert can provide.

19:9-18 ***What are you doing here:*** After some time in the desert, this question by God assumed that Elijah had a great ministry before him. But the ministry was not in the desert. ***Still small voice:*** God does not need to appear in great physical events as earthquakes and fires in order to initiate His work. His power can be concealed behind a whisper. ***I alone am left:*** This was a complaint that came forth from one who was emotionally exhausted. It seems to be the words of one who felt that the restoration of Israel should have been immediate. What Elijah did not realize was that great restorations take a great deal of time, sometimes beyond the lifetime of the ones who initiate them. It takes great faith and knowledge of the word of God, therefore, for true restoration leaders to initiate and stand firm in the direction to which they lead the people of God. ***Anoint Hazael ... Jehu ... anoint Elisha:*** God's answer for depression is to get to work. Change was coming, but it would not come in the lifetime of Elijah. Not only would the kings change in Israel and Judah, the work of the leading prophet of God would change from Elijah to Elisha. When a great shift of social behavior is to be made toward God after decades of apostasy, it takes more than one generation to complete the paradigm shift. The pioneers of the restoration never realize the full effect of their dreams. However, once they establish the foundation for change upon the word of God, the heirs of their dreams will complete the restoration. It may take decades to accomplish the restoration, and thus those who would restore the faith of the righteous must be content to walk by faith, not knowing the final end of their efforts.

19:19-21 ***Twelve yoke of oxen:*** Elisha was apparently a successful farmer, as well as one who knew the culture of work. In finding a successor for Elijah, God sent him to the farms and not to the city. Farmers know how to struggle for survival in a culture of work. ***Elijah ... cast his mantle on him:*** This was symbolic of Elijah anointing Elisha to come follow him. Elisha realized the significance of the gesture, and thus asked to bid farewell to his mother and father according to the custom of the land. Elisha realized that the ministry to which he was called demanded that he leave his father

and mother (Compare comments Lk 14:25-35). ***Ministered to him:*** The disciple ministered to the master. It was not the case where the master took care of the disciple (See comments Gl 6:6). One never learns discipleship if he is cared for as a child, and thus is never allowed to grow in order to learn the responsibility of caring for others.

Chapter 20
VICTORY OVER SYRIA

The events that are recorded in the last chapters of 1 Kings took place in the last five or six years of the reign of Ahab. There were three nations involved in the conflicts of these years of chaos. Israel, Judah and Syria were the primary nations in conflict. However, at this time another nation was arising in history that would eventually play a significant role in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel. This was the Assyrian Empire. A significant battle took place at Karkar (854/853 B.C.) where both Ahab of Israel, and Ben-hadad of Syria were allied against the Assyrians. Though mentioned in the historical records of the Monolith Inscription of Shalmaneser, this great historical battle is not mentioned in the Bible.

20:1-12 ***Thirty-two kings:*** These were mayors, or provincial rulers of city-states that were in alliance with Ben-hadad. Ahab agreed to the request of the alliance of kings under Ben-hadad by paying gold, silver and giving hostages to Ben-hadad. However, he rejected Ben-hadad's entrance into the capital. Of course, this did not set well with Ben-hadad who subsequently threatened that he would level Samaria. ***Do not let him who puts on his armor boast:*** The one going to battle should not boast as the one who has already won the battle and is taking off his armor.

20:13-22 ***A prophet:*** Now that Ahab was in trouble, a true prophet was available to speak the truth to him. It took times of trouble for Ahab to listen to the prophets of God. The prophet came to give instructions concerning what to do in reference to the threat of Ben-hadad. The prophet's advice was to take the offensive.

20:23-27 ***Gods of the hills:*** The pagan armies believed that the gods went to battle with them in particular places. The Syrians thought they could escape the help of the "Israelite gods" by engaging the Israelite army in the plains, where they thought the Israelite gods did not work. It was easy for them to perceive this from Israel's behavior of going to the high places to offer their sacrifices. Where one worships his god is where others believe his god is located. The strategy of the Syrians in this battle was to allow the kings to determine the battle plan, but allow the captains of the soldiers to engage the enemy on the battle field. ***Flocks of kids:*** In comparison to the army of the Syrians, the Israelite army was like a small group of goats. What the Syrians did not know was that God was going to use this battle for an occasion to prove that He still fought for His people. The omnipresent God of Israel was the only true and living God who was with His people wherever they were. He was not a God who was confined to a certain location, but an omnipresent God in whom we live and have our existence.

20:28-30 ***100,000 ... 27,000:*** The casualties on the side of the Syrians was massive. It was so massive that anyone would conclude that there was supernatural empowerment in the lives of every Israelite soldier from the God in whom he believed.

20:31-34 ***Sackcloth ... ropes:*** The sackcloth indicated that they humbled themselves before Ahab. The ropes were a signal that they would submit to him. ***He is my brother:*** Ahab did not want to kill Ben-hadad, for the Assyrian Empire to the north of Syria was growing. Syria stood between Israel and the Assyrians, and thus Israel would need an alliance with Syria in order that Syria be a buffer between Israel and Assyria. This agreement with Syria explains why the Syrians and Israelites fought as a united front against the Assyrians at the battle of Karkar in 854/853 B.C.

20:35-43 ***A certain man:*** The fact that this prophet was not named indicates that the prophets were simply the spokesmen for God. God did not work through His prophets in order to bring them fame. The true prophets worked in order to bring glory to God. They exerted no political leadership as did the judges who ministered in the early history of Israel. Since the Mt. Carmel contest between Elijah and the Baal prophets, and the subsequent execution of the 450 Baal prophets, the true prophets of God were no longer working underground in Israel. In this case, a prophet brings judgment upon Ahab because he allowed Ben-hadad to go free. Though the victory of Israel over Syria clearly proved that God was working for Israel, Ahab refused to recognize God's work in the army of Israel. He thus made a political agreement with the Syrians while snubbing God's protection. As in the case of Saul failing to kill Agag, the king of the Amalekites, Ahab rendered only partial obedience to the will of God when he spared Ben-hadad (Compare 1 Sm 15:17-33). ***Heavy and displeased:*** Ahab believed the rebuke that came to him through the prophet. The joy of his victory was turned into disappointment, knowing that God did not approve of his actions to allow Ben-hadad to live.

Chapter 21
NABOTH'S VINEYARD

21:1-4 This incident reveals the personality of a spoiled king who always had his way, and his relationship with his wife who seemed to be a dominant figure in the spoiled king's life. ***Inheritance:*** Naboth could not sell his vineyard simply because the land was part of the inheritance of his family (See Lv 25:23-28; Nm 36). If he sold this inherited land, he could not buy from another person because others were under the same restriction not to sell the inheritance of their families. Ahab knew this principle, but still wanted the land. He arrogantly thought of himself and not the family of Naboth. He thus pouted when he could not have that which he wanted.

21:5-16 Jezebel, who was from Tyre, had no respect for the laws of the Israelites. And in this case, she had no feelings for the life of another. ***Do you not govern the kingdom:*** Jezebel's reasoning was that since Ahab was the king, he could rule without respect to the law. As the king, she reasoned, he could do what he wanted. This thinking had permeated the kings of

Israel. Contrary to the spirit of David, they disregarded the law of God in order to do that which was right in their own eyes. They did not respect the rule of law in the lives of all men. ***Men of his city, even the elders:*** It is appalling that even those who knew Naboth succumbed to the intimidation of Jezebel to murder Naboth. Even the elders of the city were intimidated to conform to the desires of a wicked woman. When the leaders of a nation are intimidated to conform to the desires of the president, king or chief, then the people often suffer the brutality of all the leadership. ***Two worthless men:*** Or, sons of Belial. In carrying out their murder scheme, they obeyed the law by securing two witnesses (Dt 17:6,7), as well as carrying out the process of execution by stoning (Lv 24:13-16). They obeyed laws in order to break the law. Such were the actions of the religious leaders of Jesus' day who conformed to their legal practice of the law to crucify Jesus in order to commit murder that was contrary to the law.

21:17-29 ***O my enemy:*** When one sets himself against the will of God, those who represent God are his enemies (See comments Js 4:4). In this case Elijah became Ahab's enemy in that he brought words of judgment from the Lord. The message was death to both Jezebel and Ahab. It was not only death, but the horrible manner by which they would die. The message to both was public, and thus in their death the people would realize that the prophecy concerning the manner of their deaths was the fulfillment of a prophecy from God. ***Tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh:*** Ahab had some conscience still in him, though Jezebel probably thought the words of Elijah were rubbish. But because the words of Elijah affected Ahab to cause him great sorrow, God spared him so that his judgment would not come about in his life. His sons would pay the price for his wickedness in reference to his stealing the vineyard of Naboth. His posterity would be cut off from Israel.

Chapter 22

AHAB'S DEATH

22:1-12 ***Third year:*** Israel's alliance with Syria lasted for three years. This is probably the three years from the battle of Aphek (20:26-29) to Israel's attempt to take Ramoth Gilead. At the end of the three years, Ahab made an alliance with Jehoshaphat and Judah in order to secure themselves against the threat of Syria and Assyria from the north. ***Gathered the prophets:*** Though 450 false prophets were executed by Elijah at Mt. Carmel, another group of false prophets eventually developed to take their place and were often called by the northern kingdom king for advice (See Is 9:15; Jr 5:13,31; 23:11,15,16; Hs 4:5; Mc 3:5-7). Their advice to Ahab was based on their perception of what they thought he wanted to hear. ***Is there not here a prophet of the Lord:*** Jehoshaphat had not left the counsel of the Lord as did his counterpart in the northern kingdom. He still relied on the prophecy of the Lord.

22:13-23 Since Jehoshaphat was present, the false prophets of Ahab probably felt confident, and thus assumed that because the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel were united, that victory in the battle with the Syrians was certain. ***Micaiah:*** Everyone, including Micaiah, knew of the judgment that had been given by the man of God concerning Ahab's theft of Naboth's vineyard. Failure in this battle with Syria, therefore, presented the opportunity for God's judgment to come upon Ahab. In his prophecy, Micaiah exposed the false statements of the prophets whom Ahab had called to support his desires. He also revealed that judgment was now to come upon Ahab.

22:24-28 ***Zedekiah:*** The reason the false prophets always spoke things that were favorable to Ahab was because of actions from men as Zedekiah who were always eager to punish anyone who spoke something against the king. This type of religious intimidation is common when preachers succumb to what is commonly accepted among those who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the people. In this case, as in other cases when truth was spoken against the common beliefs of the day, the fulfillment was the proof that the prophet was truly from God (See Dt 18:18-22).

22:29-36 ***I will disguise myself:*** It seems that Ahab somewhat believed what Micaiah had said concerning his fate. He subsequently asked Jehoshaphat to wear his royal clothing in order that the Syrians in the battle not identify him as the king of Israel. ***Fight ... only with the king of Israel:*** If the king of a nation were killed or captured in battle, then victory was claimed. In this case, Ben-hadad wanted to focus his soldiers' attention on the king of the northern kingdom, not Jehoshaphat. ***At random and struck the king of Israel:*** Was this an arrow that was guided by the will of God? Since this was Ahab's judgment from God, we would conclude that nothing that Ahab could have done would change his destiny in reference to the judgment from God. When the report that Ahab had died was spread throughout the Israelite army, they disbursed and every man fled to his own home.

22:37-40 Ahab died in fulfillment of God's judgment on him for his sinful ways, specifically his theft of Naboth's vineyard (21:19; 20:42). ***Ivory ... pool:*** Archaeologists have discovered pieces of ivory in Samaria, confirming the existence of the ivory palace of Ahab. A large pool has also been discovered, which was probably the place where the chariots of the army were cleaned after a battle.

REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT

The books of 1 & 2 Kings were originally one book. The union between the two kingdoms of Israel begins with the reign of Jehoshaphat and continues through to 2 Kings 17:23 when Samaria fell to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C.

22:41-46 (2 Ch 17:1 – 20:37) There is a more complete explanation of the reign of Jehoshaphat in the Chronicles' account. Contrary to the idolatrous practices of the northern kingdom, Jehoshaphat did not adopt idolatrous practices at this time in the history of the southern kingdom. ***Sodomites:*** Asa, the father of Jehoshaphat, was tolerant of the sodomites and allowed the high places of the Canaanite sacrifices to remain (14:21-24). However, Jehoshaphat removed the sodomites, but failed to tear down the high places. As long as the places of sodomite worship were allowed to exist, the people were tempted to go there to sin in their false worship.

22:47-50 ***Fleet of trading ships:*** Jehoshaphat, as Solomon, started to rebuild the southern kingdom of Israel by sending trading ships to Ophir (See 9:26-28). Ahaziah of the northern kingdom wanted to join in this venture, but Jehoshaphat refused to allow his idolatrous sailors to join his sailors on the ships.

REIGN OF AHAZIAH

22:51-53 Little is said of the reign of Ahaziah, other than his efforts to align with Jehoshaphat in the acquisition of copper from Ophir and his idolatrous behavior that he continued from his father, Ahab. He continued the sacrifices before the altars that Jeroboam set up in Bethel and Dan. He also continued sacrifices to Baal. The religious culture of the northern kingdom had been established, and thus the continuation of this idolatrous culture would eventually lead to the captivity of the northern ten tribes by the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. Once a religious culture of rebellion against the word of God is established, it is almost impossible for the people to repent. When customs are sinful, those who are very traditional in their behavior have a very difficult time in changing their behavior to conform to the word of God.

2 Kings

WRITER

The key character in this book is Elisha and his fifty-year ministry, though it is not believed that he wrote 1 & 2 Kings. Since 1 & 2 Kings were originally one book, then there would have been only one writer. (See "writer" in introduction to 1 Kings.) Who this writer was cannot be determined from the text. Since knowing the writer of a particular book does not determine whether a Bible book is inspired, then we would conclude as the Jews that the book was given to the Jewish nation by God for reasons that did not involve any personal legacy of a writer. Our belief that the book is inspired by the Holy Spirit rests on the faith of the Jews who originally accepted the book as an inspired book. And since there is nothing in the content of the book that would lead us to question its inspiration, we accept without any doubt that this book is from God and for all believers. The Jews who first received the writings considered the book to be from the hand of a prophet.

DATE

The date for this book would be about the same as 1 Kings, or sometime after 586 B.C. when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and when Jehoiachin was raised up out of prison by Evil-merodach (25:27-30). In reference to the dates assigned to the reigns of kings in both Israel and Judah, there is great difficulty. Biblical resources use different dates, depending on the amount of information that was available at the time the resource was written. The Bible student, therefore, should not put too much emphasis on the dates that are assigned to the reign of kings. The dates that are used in these notes are only suggested, and thus should not be considered dogmatically as the exact dates of either events or the reigns of kings. It was not the purpose of the authors of either the Kings or Chronicles to place importance on exact dates for the sake of Hebrew history. What God wanted to communicate were the lessons from history that we should learn.

BOOK

Since 1 & 2 Kings were originally one book, then this book is the continuation of the history of 1 Kings. 2 Kings covers a period of about 250 years, from around 852 B.C. to the time when Jehoiachin was released from prison in Babylonian captivity. The history that is covered is from the death of Ahab to a few years after the final captivity of God's people and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Some have suggested that the book was written sometime between 560 and 550 B.C.

1 & 2 Kings focus specifically on the rulers of the northern kingdom of Israel. 1 & 2 Chronicles focus primarily on the kings of Judah, the southern kingdom. Also in the Chronicles there is more emphasis on the temple of Jerusalem and the priesthood.

The purpose of 2 Kings is to remind the people of God why they were taken into captivity. Since both 1 & 2 Kings were written with emphasis on the sin of Israel, it would be correct to assume that the writer wanted to remind the remnant of Israel the reason why God allowed both the Assyrians and Babylonians to remove them from the land of promise. 2 Kings was written in reference to the apostasy of the northern kingdom that continued with Ahab, king of the northern kingdom, until the final captivity of the southern kingdom in 586 B.C. In view of the purpose of the captivities, we would conclude that the purpose of both 1 & 2 Kings was to remind Israel never again to commit those sins that resulted in their removal from the land of promise. When they returned from Babylonian captivity, they had learned from their history. Never again did they centralize their governance around a king on earth, nor did they create any idol gods after their imagination, or adopt any gods from the nations around them. Neither did they idolize and store up their wealth in a temple treasury. Throughout

the approximately four hundred years between their final return from Babylonian captivity in 444 B.C. to the time of Jesus, they remained faithful to the Lord. Never again did they fall into idolatry.

Close Of Elijah's Ministry
(1:1 – 2:12)

Outline: (1) Sin and sickness of Ahaziah (1:1-4), (2) Elijah's conflict with Ahaziah (1:5-18), (3) Elijah is taken (2:1-12)

Chapter 1
SIN & SICKNESS OF AHAZIAH

1:1-4 ***Ahaziah:*** He reigned in the north from around 853 to 852 B.C. ***Baalzebub:*** Usually when one is near death, he seeks out the foundation of his true beliefs. In this case, Ahaziah revealed how fallen Israel was in that he sought out revelation from Baalzebub ("Baal of the flies"), instead of God. ***No God in Israel:*** Elijah meant to ridicule Ahaziah with this question. He also wanted to bring judgment on Ahaziah for his apostasy from God to the point of not first going to the One who brought Israel into existence by bringing the nation out of Egyptian captivity. Thus the writer establishes here the reason for the removal of Israel from the promised land. They had forsaken God, and thus God handed them over to be removed from the land. They were thus responsible for their own captivity. They could not blame God for reaping what they had sown.

ELIJAH'S CONFLICT WITH AHAZIAH

1:5-18 ***What manner of man:*** Elijah was described according to his common dress. He went about in garments that signified the morally digressed state in which Israel was, that is, in clothing that was rough and coarse. Thus everyone knew his identity by his dress. ***Captain of fifty:*** There were three captains and their soldiers who approached Elijah. It was not until the last captain who showed respect for Elijah, that Elijah accepted the invitation. The arrogance of the first two captains cost them their lives, as well as the lives of their soldiers. It was not until the fear of God was instilled in the third that he and his soldiers were spared. However, the death of the first two captains and their soldiers was not in vain, for the apostate state of the northern kingdom at this time needed a drastic demonstration of the presence of God in His prophets. Ahaziah needed to be reminded that God was working only through His prophets, not the false prophets of Baal. ***So he died:*** Ahaziah died and left the nation of Israel in a state of apostasy. He thus continued the legacy of apostasy that prevailed in the leadership of the northern kingdom. Because of this apostasy, the tribes of the north would be taken into Assyrian captivity.

Chapter 2
ELIJAH IS TAKEN

2:1-12 Elisha was briefly mentioned in 1 Kings 19:19-21. It was now time for him to take over as God's primary representative to His people. ***Sons of the prophets:*** As opposed to the prophets of Baal, these would be the prophets of God who were under the leadership of Elijah (See 1 Sm 10:9-13). This may have been a school or community of prophets that was originally started by Samuel, but continued many years after him (See 1 Kg 18:4; 20:35; Is 8:16). They were personally called by the leading prophets of the time, and then studied and traveled in groups. Their primary homes could have been in cities as Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal. On this occasion, these prophets had received revelation from God that Elisha was to take the place of Elijah. ***Double portion of your spirit:*** This request has often been misunderstood to mean that Elisha wanted to receive more miraculous power than what Elijah possessed. But this is probably not what is in his mind, since such power is only in the hand of God and administered by God through His prophets according to what a particular situation demanded. No man possessed any miraculous power. All such power is with God. In this request, what Elisha wanted was the "double portion" that one would receive as a firstborn son (See Dt 21:15-17). Elisha considered himself the "firstborn prophet son" of Elijah, and thus sought the firstborn privileges that came with being the successor to Elijah. He would receive the responsibilities of the firstborn, and thus carry a greater burden of ministry since his ministry would take place at the end of the northern kingdom. His ministry lasted for about fifty years. ***By a whirlwind into heaven:*** The manner by which Elijah was taken from this world was a manner by which God had before revealed Himself to man (See Ex 19:16-25; Ps 18:7-15). In order to inaugurate his ministry, God desired that Elisha witness this awesome miracle. The miracle was not so much for the purpose of giving Elijah an escape from physical death, but to provide a miraculous testimony to Elisha that God was involved in his life and would be with him throughout the trying years of his ministry.

Ministry Of Elisha
(2:13 – 13:25)

Outline: (1) Beginning of Elisha's ministry (2:13-25), (2) Wars against Moab (3:1-27), (3) A miracle of creation (4:1-7), (4) A miracle of resurrection (4:8-37), (5) Poisoned pottage (4:38-41), (6) Another miracle of creation (4:42-44), (7) Naaman, the leper (5:1-27), (8) Floating ax head (6:1-7), (9) Army smitten with blindness (6:8-23), (10) Samaria saved from a famine (6:24 – 7:20), (11) The influence of Elisha (8:1-6), (12) Prophecy of Ben-hadad's death (8:7-15), (13) Reigns of Jehoram and Joram (8:16-24), (14) Reign of Ahaziah (8:25-29), (15) Reign of Jehu (9:1 – 10:36), (16) Rise and fall of Athaliah (11:1-21), (17) Reign of Joash (12:1-21), (18) Reign of Jehoahaz (13:1-9), (19) Death of Elisha (13:10-25)

BEGINNING OF ELISHA'S MINISTRY

2:13-18 ***My father:*** This was directed toward Elijah, and thus Elisha acknowledged that Elijah was his spiritual father. ***The mantle of Elijah:*** The mantle was the symbol of responsibility that Elijah bestowed on Elisha. This was the sign of

the "double portion" for which Elisha had asked in verse 9. He was thus "anointed" through the receiving of the mantle that he was the rightful successor to Elijah. With the double portion of responsibility, however, would come God's power that would rest on Elisha as it did on Elijah. Elisha would be God's primary prophet to Israel during her years of apostasy. ***Where is the Lord God of Elijah:*** Elisha had been given the office of Elijah, but he had to receive also the power of God that was evident in the life of Elijah. In the miracles that followed in the early ministry of Elisha, the people discovered that the Lord God of Elijah was now with Elisha. Once Elisha was established as God's primary prophet to the people, then the people understood that what he spoke was from God. ***Go and search for your master:*** Since no one had experienced the ascent of Elijah, then certainly they were curious concerning his whereabouts. In order to dispel any doubt concerning the word that Elisha spoke concerning his master being taken directly into heaven, he released the group to go and search for the body of Elijah. Their search would confirm his testimony of the miracle of how Elijah departed.

2:19-22 ***The water is bad:*** This miracle before the people happened in order to establish Elisha as one through whom God worked. In this occurrence of a true miracle, there were no incantations or ceremonies. Elisha simply called on God to purify the waters, and the deed was done immediately.

2:23-25 ***Young lads:*** We must not think that these were small children. These young men were old enough to assume responsibility for their disrespectful behavior toward a man of God. Since the young men had possibly heard that Elisha was now the representative of God, they, in their unbelief or influence from the prophets of Baal, jeered the man of God. They subsequently reaped the consequences of their insults, receiving the immediate judgment of God that was pronounced on them by Elisha. The purpose of the miracle was to instill fear in others to greatly respect Elisha as a prophet of God.

Chapter 3
WARS AGAINST MOAB

3:1-3 Jehoram reigned in the northern kingdom from 852 to 841 B.C. His reign in the north coincided with the latter part of the reign of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah in the southern kingdom. He did not follow in all the corrupt practices of his father and mother, Ahab and Jezebel. Nevertheless, he continued in the sins of Jeroboam. He did not follow in the occult worship of Baal, since he removed the image of Baal from the temple of Baal. However, since he continued in the sins of Jeroboam he encouraged the continued separation of the northern kingdom from the south, demanding the loyalty of the people of the north by their sacrifices before the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

3:4-12 ***Mesha, king of Moab:*** Mesha rebelled against Israel. Jehoram, king of Israel, set out to subjugate the Moabites once again to Israelite control. Jehoram succeeded in defeating Mesha's army and destroying several Moabite cities. However, he was not able to take the capital of Moab, Kir Hareseth. For this reason, Mesha was able to retain his independence from Israel. One of the most significant archaeological discoveries was a monument that was made by this king (See *Encyclopedic Study Guide*, Archaeology and the Bible, A, The Moabite Stone). ***Moab rebelled:*** There was confusion in the northern kingdom when Ahab died. The short reign of Ahaziah in the south presented the opportunity for Mesha to throw off the yoke of the house of Omri. Since an alliance between Ahab and Jehoshaphat still existed at the time, Jehoram asked Jehoshaphat to aid him in subjecting Mesha again to his control. ***King of Edom:*** It seems that Edom was a subject of Judah, and thus Edom was conscripted to join in the effort to subjugate Mesha. ***Poured water on the hands of Elijah:*** Elisha was a servant to the needs of Elijah.

3:13-20 ***What have I to do with you:*** Elisha showed disdain toward Jehoram because he had turned from the God of Israel by tolerating the false prophets that had been established in Israel by his forefathers. Nevertheless, for the sake of Judah he said that he would inquire of the Lord concerning the battle that was about to begin with Moab. The answer to Elisha's prophecy of rain was another miraculous confirmation of his ministry as a prophet of God. The fulfillment also reassured Jehoshaphat that there would be victory over Moab.

3:21-27 ***The sun shone on the water****:* Since the area east of the Jordan was known for being a desert, the reflection of the sun off the water gave the impression that it was red in color. Thinking that there was no water in this region, the Moabites mistook the reflection for blood. They concluded that fighting must have broken out between the three kings who came to war against him. ***Offered him as a burnt offering:*** This desperate action on the part of Mesha revealed the morally deplorable state to which the nations of these time had digressed. ***Great indignation against Israel:*** The extremity to which Mesha went in sacrificing his son indicated the extremity of resentment they had toward the Israelites. It seems that the final battle did not occur, and thus Mesha was not totally subdued. ***They departed:*** It seems that the sacrifice of the oldest son on the wall of the Moabite city repulsed the Israelites (See Lv 18:21; 20:3). Since they had already shown Mesha that he had no chance of victory against the coalition of three nations, Israel, Judah and Edom, the three nations retreated from their war with Mesha after having defeated several of the cities of Moab.

Chapter 4
A MIRACLE OF CREATION

4:1-7 In the supernatural manifestations that continued from the presence of Elisha, God proved among the people that Elisha was a true prophet of God. In this first illustration of God's presence with Elisha, a miracle of creation occurred. ***The creditor has come:*** The prophets were poor. In this case, the widow of one of the prophets had been left with nothing except debt. It was a time in Israel when the people had little concern for the servants of God. They were thus supported by little or nothing. The prophets were men worthy of their hire, but were given little or nothing. ***To be his slaves:*** If a debt could not be paid, then one had to give himself into the slavery of another until the debt was settled (Lv 25:39,40). This servitude could be terminated only if the debt were settled by labor,

or when all servants were released during the year of Jubilee. ***Borrow vessels:*** As the creation of fish and loaves at the hand of Jesus, so here is a miracle of creation (Compare Mt 14:13-21).

A MIRACLE OF RESURRECTION

4:8-17 ***Room ... bed:*** The faith and religious culture of the woman was manifested in her desire to care for the needs of a man of God who was traveling. Instead of seeing the man of God as someone from whom she could possibly reap benefits, she saw him as an opportunity to glorify God by serving him. ***She had no child:*** Since the husband was old, it was concluded that she also was too old and past the age of giving birth to children. The miracle, therefore, was in the fact that God gave her body strength to conceive and give birth to a son.

4:18-31 ***My head:*** We are not told what the ailment was, but we could assume that he suffered from sun stroke. ***She caught him by the feet:*** Since both the parents knew that the child was dead, we are not told what help the Shunammite woman expected that Elisha could administer to her. Nevertheless, in her grief she made the journey to find Elisha and bow at his feet for help, possibly receiving only the comforting words of a man of God. She seems to have received more than she thought she could receive, for her humble actions resulted in the resurrection of her son.

4:32-37 ***Lay on the child:*** It seems that there was no consequence concerning the action of Elisha to lay on the child. His actions may simply have been a show of remorse over the death of the son. However, God had more in mind. ***Take up your son:*** This was a private occurrence of a miracle. However, we are sure that the Shunammite woman, with the neighbors, proclaimed throughout the region the fact that a resurrection had occurred as a result of God working through Elisha. It may have been in the foreknowledge of God that He bless the woman with a son in order to establish an occasion by which He could manifest a miracle through Elisha. We must always keep in mind that God was working in desperate times in order to save His people from total apostasy. He thus worked mightily through His prophets in order to turn His people away from the influence of false gods that they continually created after the imagination of their minds.

POISONED POTTAGE

4:38-41 The famine in the land was so severe that the sons of the prophets were cooking anything that could be found to eat. In this case, they were cooking some wild gourds that were not meant for human consumption. ***There is death in the pot:*** The contents of the pot were so toxic that if fully consumed someone would have died. Elisha added meal, but did not discard the contents of the pot. The miracle was in the changing of the toxic contents into that which would not bring death if eaten. This miracle, as other miracles in the presence of the prophets, established Elisha as a special servant of God. God did not instill in the other prophets the supernatural authority that He allowed Elisha to exercise before the people. Their authority was in the power of their word that came to them through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

ANOTHER MIRACLE OF CREATION

4:42-44 This miracle was in the fact that one hundred men could be fed by a small amount of food. As in the feeding of both the 5,000 and 4,000 men by Jesus (Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39), this miracle of creation proved that God was with Elisha in all that he did.

Chapter 5

NAAMAN, THE LEPER

5:1-7 It is significant to remember the relationship that the people of Israel historically had with Aram, or Syria. The two peoples were related. Abraham was of Aramean heritage, for his family came from Haran (Gn 12:1; 24:4). Jacob was also called an Aramean (Dt 26:5), as also was his uncle Laban (Gn 25:20), and his grandfather, Bethuel (Gn 25:20; 28:5). ***Deliverance to Syria:*** It may have been that God worked to deliver Syria from her oppressors in order to establish the occasion for the healing of Naaman. Since Israel was to function as a priesthood to the nations, this incident illustrates how at least a leader in Syria was brought to the nation of Israel, specifically to a prophet of God, in order that testimony be given to Syria that there was only one true and living God. ***He would cure him:*** The faith of this little girl would lead to the conversion of one of the most renowned warriors of Syria, and subsequently a testimony through Naaman that there was only one God. We must not underestimate the testimony of our children. ***The king of Israel ... tore his clothes:*** The king misunderstood the reason for Naaman's coming. Naaman was only being diplomatic in contacting the king of Israel. The bringing of great gifts was an act of courtesy. Since the king knew the strength of Naaman and the Syrians, he wrongly assumed that Naaman was coming for battle. He was mistaken, for Naaman was not coming for political ambitions, but for healing.

5:8-14 The occasion for the healing was to prove that there was only one God who could heal. The point was that Satan did no miraculous works among the pagan nations that surrounded Israel. ***Abanah and Pharpar:*** These were better rivers than those in Israel in that they were mountain rivers of fresh water, whereas the rivers of Israel were lowland rivers that were often filled with the runoff silt of the lowlands. Elisha's instructions were meant to humble Naaman. There was no ceremonial healing power in the waters of any river, and thus, the test that was given to Naaman by the man of God was to humble him before God. Naaman passed the test with the urging of his servants. In desperation, he obeyed the instructions of Elisha.

5:15-19 ***Now I know:*** The miracle of healing accomplished its purpose. ***When I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon***: We would not bring judgment on Naaman for compromising his new faith. In his position in the army of Syria he had to maintain political loyalty before the people for the sake of the king of Syria. The kings of the land paid homage to the gods the people respected in order to maintain their leadership of the people. Because of his position of influence with the king of Syria, Naaman asked for the pardon of God that his appearance in the house of Rimmon for political reasons not be understood by God that he was compromising his

new faith in God. Since faith was individual in reference to God, Elisha reassured Naaman that his ceremonial appearance in the house of Rimmon would not compromise his relationship with God. It was better that Naaman continue with his personal testimony to the one true and living God in Syria in the position that he had in the country, than to sacrifice such in defiance to the king of Syria by not appearing with him in the temple of Rimmon. We would assume that all those who personally knew Naaman were given a testimony for God because they witnessed his healing upon his return to Syria.

5:20-27 Gehazi's greed led him to lies. He failed to be influenced by the example of Elisha to guard himself from receiving payment for something that God had done. The healing of Naaman did not result from any power that Elisha possessed. The miraculous power was directly from God. If Elisha had received a financial reward for the healing, he, as Gehazi, would have been condemned for his greed. Because Gehazi capitalized on the miraculous work of God, and lied to Naaman, he reaped the consequences of bringing leprosy on himself and his heritage. The lesson is that those who preach for gain, as Balaam, will reap the reward of God's curse.

Chapter 6

FLOATING AX HEAD

6:1-7 This was a miracle to reaffirm the faith of the sons of the prophets. God continued to give witness that Elisha was the principal prophet of God. The impossibility that something as this could naturally happen strengthens the action of the miracle. Only by the direct work of God in the natural affairs of a physical world could iron (or, bronze) float on water. ***It was borrowed:*** Under the law, if that which was borrowed became lost or destroyed, then the one who borrowed it was accountable for the cost or replacement of that which was borrowed. In this case, the young prophet had no means by which to replace the lost ax head, and thus his desperation was revealed by his statement.

ARMY SMITTEN WITH BLINDNESS

6:8-14 ***Syria warred against Israel:*** The time of these raids would probably be during the reign of Jehoram, not during the reigns of Jehu, Jehoash or Jehoahaz. ***Which of us is for the king of Israel:*** Time after time the Syrian aggression against Israel had led to the defeat of the Syrian army. Their defeat happened so many times that the king of Syria assumed that there was a traitor among them who was telling Israel all the military moves of the Syrian army. What was happening in the background was the prophetic counsel of Elisha that was given to the king of Israel. The counsel was given in order to prove that God was still working for Israel, and thus the Israelites should turn from following the prophets of Baal. ***Elisha ... is telling the king:*** We would assume that the king of Syria would conclude that there was something miraculous about Elisha's knowledge of the movements of his own troops. And such was the case. He thus sought to remove Elisha as an advisor to the king of Israel. In order to do this, the Syrian army trapped Elisha in Dothan with the intent of killing him.

6:15-18 ***Those who are with us are more than those who are with them:*** The pronoun "those" in this statement of faith referred also to those who could not be seen naturally by the eyes of man. These were the angels of God who protected His prophets. The young man was given a rare opportunity to see beyond the limitations of man's sight that can see only that which is of the physical world. Through the miraculous enhancement of his eyes he was able to witness the great army of God that works to protect the men of God. ***Struck them with blindness:*** The young man of God was given the power to see the army of God, but the army of the Syrians was stricken with blindness so that they could not even see men of this world. Those who would bring harm to the men of God are always blinded to the power of God that works through His people.

6:19-23 ***He led them to Samaria:*** The trap into which the king of Syria sought to lead the Israelites became the same type of trap into which Elisha led the soldiers of the Syrian army. When the soldiers were relieved of their blindness, they found themselves in the midst of the capital of the nation they sought to defeat. They were not killed in this situation because they were not prisoners of war. Mercy was extended to them in order that they extend mercy to Israel (See Js 2:13). ***Syrians came no more:*** The act of mercy accomplished its purpose. They had witnessed the protection of the God of Israel over His people, and thus they concluded that it would be pointless to make war against Israel. The miraculous event certainly intimidated them that they no longer be aggressive against Israel, at least during the life of those who had experienced the blindness and were captured by the power of God.

SAMARIA SAVED FROM FAMINE

6:24-29 ***Ben-hadad, king of Syria:*** There has always been confusion concerning the kings of Syria during this period, specifically in reference to the name, Ben-hadad. A suggested lineage of Syrian kings would be that Ben-hadad I, the son of Tabrimmon, reigned in the 10th to the early 9th century B.C. (1 Kg 15:18). Ben-hadad II possibly reigned in the middle of the 9th century B.C. Hazael reigned in the late 9th century B.C. Then Ben-hadad III, the son of Hazael, reigned in the early 8th century B.C. ***Besieged Samaria:*** Until this time, there was a period of peace between Israel and Syria. After this period, however, Ben-hadad II assumed Syria's aggression against Israel. He laid siege to Samaria in the middle of the 9th century. ***A donkey's head:*** In times of peace, this would have been the last meat that anyone would eat. But the eating of a donkey's head at this time during the siege of Samaria manifested the extent to which the famine had devastated the people who were trapped within the walls of Samaria. ***Kab of dove's dung:*** The famine was so great that people ate anything that would preserve life. ***We will eat my son:*** The deplorable state to which the people had digressed in their morals was here revealed by the cannibalism of two mothers.

6:30-33 Jehoram, the king of Israel at the time, wore the sackcloth of repentance. In his ignorance, he blamed Elisha for the plight of Samaria. We are not told why he blamed Elisha. It was probably because Elisha had prophesied that Samaria would be victorious over Syria. But here they were

in desperation. However, the nation simply needed to be restored to faith in God who would deliver them after they had been brought to their knees in repentance. ***Elisha sat in his house:*** We must keep in mind that Elisha and the elders were also suffering from the famine. ***Son of a murderer:*** Jehoram was a murderer in the sense that he intended to murder Elisha. He was a murderer long before he would have carried out the act of murder.

Chapter 7

7:1,2 Elisha prophesied that the end of the famine was near, for on the next day food would be sold for a normal price. The reason the prophecy was so difficult to believe was that they had no food to sell. So if food were to be sold for the normal price, then what food would it be that could be sold?

7:3-8 ***Four leprous men:*** The drama that took place in the lives of these four men led to the announcement that Elisha's prophecy had been fulfilled. As these men sat at the gate of Samaria, they concluded that they would die either there or in the city. Their only chance for life was to beg for mercy at the camp of the Syrians. ***Noise of a great army:*** What the lepers did not know was the miraculous noise that God caused the Syrian army to hear. In the darkness of the night, the Syrian soldiers assumed that the Hittites and Egyptians had come to the aid of Samaria. In the mass confusion of their terror, they deserted their camp and fled for their lives.

7:9-20 ***This day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace:*** The lepers had a profound message of deliverance to share with others. At the time, they were consumed with satisfying their own lusts. But then they realized that the message they had would lead to the physical salvation of others. Thus when they came to their senses, they went and told the inhabitants of Samaria. When the lepers first reported that the camp of the Syrians was vacant, Jehoram believed that it was a trick of the Syrians to lure him out of the city. Messengers were subsequently sent to determine the truth of the lepers' report. ***Plundered the tents of the Syrians:*** In their terror, the Syrians had left everything. And thus, the prophecy of Elisha was fulfilled in that food was again sold for the normal price. God had taken Israel to the depths of a famine in order to produce repentance and trust in Him for deliverance. ***Trampled on him at the gate:*** The people were so hungry that they rushed as a mob to the deserted camp of the Syrians for food. The captain was in the way at the gate, and thus suffered the prophecy of his death by being trampled on by the people.

Chapter 8

THE INFLUENCE OF ELISHA

8:1-6 Since Gehazi had not yet been stricken with leprosy after the healing of Naaman because of his greed, we would conclude that this incident took place before the healing of Naaman (5:1-27). It possibly took place in the middle of the reign of Jehoram. ***Go and sojourn:*** It was the advice of Elisha to the Shunammite woman that she go to another country. She went to Philistia for a period of seven years. ***Appeal ... for her land:*** When the Shunammite woman returned, someone had evidently taken possession of her house and land. The king in this case was Jehoram. Once the king learned that Elisha had raised from the dead this woman's son, he restored all that was rightfully hers.

PROPHECY OF BEN-HADAD'S DEATH

8:7-15 God had earlier commanded Elijah to anoint Hazael as king of Syria (1 Kg 19:15). Elisha carried out this command, and thus he was in Damascus for this purpose. ***Take a present:*** It was common that when one approached a prophet he was to take an offering. It was disrespectful to expect something of a prophet without first presenting the prophet with a gift. On this occasion, Ben-hadad showed great respect to Elisha and the God of Israel, though we would not assume that Ben-hadad was a convert to the God of Israel. ***You will certainly recover:*** He would recover from his illness. This statement reveals that Hazael's action to suffocate Ben-hadad was an act of murder, because under normal circumstances he would have recovered. ***Hazael reigned:*** Hazael murdered Ben-hadad, and thus was known for usurping the throne in Syria. Hazael reigned from 841 to 798 B.C. Archaeologists have discovered a monument inscription in Aramaic at Tel Dan, Israel. Only a fraction of the inscription was recovered, but enough to give the names of eight kings of the Bible. The inscription dated in the middle of the 9th century B.C. Though Hazael's name is not on the inscription, what was recovered indicates that he commissioned the stela (monument) to be made to commemorate his defeat of Joram and Ahaziah at Ramoth Gilead (8:28,29). Hazael's name is mentioned in the records of Shalmaneser III, the king of Assyria. One of the most interesting statements of the Tel Dan monument is the phrase, "House of David," thus giving Bible students evidence of the existence of David as a king of Israel.

REIGNS OF JEHORAM & JORAM

8:16-24 ***Jehoram ... began to reign:*** The name "Jehoram" appears in the lists of kings of both Israel and Judah. However, these men were two different kings. Joram is a shortened version of the name Jehoram (vs 16; 1:17). ***As did the house of Ahab:*** This was the sin of following after the imagined gods of the Canaanites. Since Jehoram had married the daughter of Ahab, Athaliah, we would assume that she had a significant influence on his beliefs. Through this marriage, therefore, the idolatrous influence of the northern kingdom came into Judah. ***For the sake of David:*** Judah did not reap the consequences of her idolatry at this time in history because of God's consideration for David. God held back His judgment on the south in order to preserve for as long as possible the influence of David that continued to impact many of the people. When studying through the history of Israel, the Bible student must not forget that God is working with the common people about whom we know little. The records of 1 & 2 Kings focus on the leadership of Israel. We would correctly assume that the leadership affected the people, but not all the people. We must conclude, therefore, that God's preservation of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel was for the sake of the people, not the kings and queens, many of whom had given themselves over to idolatry. ***Made a king over themselves:***

Nations were held together by their loyalty to a particular ruler. God wanted Israel held together as one nation because of her loyalty to Him. At this time in the history of the tribes of Israel, they were divided because they were giving their loyalty to different kings on earth.

REIGN OF AHAZIAH

8:25-29 (2 Ch 22:1-6) ***One year:*** Ahaziah reigned in 841 B.C. ***Daughter of Omri:*** She would have been the granddaughter of Omri, for she was the daughter of Ahab. The word "daughter" was often used to refer to one as a descendant. ***He ... did evil:*** He did evil after the idolatrous behavior of Ahab and Jezebel. ***Ramoth-gilead:*** This was an attempt to reclaim this city that was under Syrian control (1 Kg 22:29-36). ***Joram:*** This would be King Jehoram of the northern kingdom. At this time in the history of Israel there was a good relationship between the northern and southern kingdoms, for the two kings had a good relationship.

Chapter 9

REIGN OF JEHU

9:1-10 ***Jehu:*** Jehu reigned in the northern kingdom from 841 to 814 B.C. His anointing as the king of the north was a change in dynasty from the house of Ahab to the house of Jehu. ***Smite the house of Ahab:*** Jehu's task was to restore Israel by eliminating the influence of the descendants of Ahab. In order to accomplish this task, he directed his purge of Israel by going after the leaders, which leaders included those who were the descendants of Ahab, as well as the religious leaders of Baal. God's intention through Jehu, therefore, was to rid Israel of the idolatrous practices of the northern kingdom. In order to do this, all influences with reference to the house of Ahab had to be removed from the society of Israel, which meant the execution of the descendants of Ahab and Jezebel, and the Baal prophets.

9:11-16 ***Mad fellow:*** This response could explain the manner by which the young prophet entered with a prophetic message. However, we must also understand that because the false prophets of Baal had intimidated the true prophets of God, any religious leader who was not for Baal was considered mad. The prophets of God were not conforming to the norm of theology that was preached by the Baal prophets. ***Jehu is king:*** It may have been that Jehu was planning a conspiracy against Jehoram before the pronouncement of the prophet. Regardless of his motives, the pronouncement was enough to motivate him to carry out his conspiracy. Those who were associated with Jehu immediately proceeded to proclaim him as the king.

9:17-26 Understanding his mission to bring the judgment of God upon the house of Ahab, Jehu wasted no time in carrying out the execution of all who were the descendants of Ahab and Jezebel. ***Met him on the property of Naboth:*** The mention of the property of Naboth was fitting for the occasion of what transpired. Naboth's vineyard had been stolen by Ahab and Jezebel, and thus, it was the ideal location to bring judgment down on the house of Ahab (1 Kg 21:19). ***I will repay you on this property:*** The insidious sin of Ahab in reference to Naboth's vineyard was that a government official, Ahab, stole the inheritance of one of the people. The actions of Ahab in doing this manifested the wickedness of his heart. His actions were surely copied by his descendants, and thus his whole house had to be removed from Israel. The judgment of casting down the body of his executed son, Jehoram, was a signal by God that such actions should never be tolerated in a nation. When those in power ignore the civil rights of the common citizen, a nation has fallen. Those in government have no right to use the people for their own financial well being. No person in government has a right to use government to steal the property of another person.

9:27-37 Because Ahaziah was in friendship with Jehoram, he thus agreed with the wickedness of the house of Ahab. For this reason Jehu commanded that he also be judged. ***Jezebel:*** With the approach of Jehu, Jezebel adorned herself, possibly thinking that she would be granted mercy. ***Zimri, your master's murderer:*** Jezebel must have known that there was execution on the mind of Jehu. She thus reminded him of Zimri who also murdered in order to seize the throne (See 1 Kg 16:8-10). ***Throw her down:*** First, two eunuchs appeared at the window near Jezebel, then three. Jehu then asked for a commitment of loyalty to him, which they gladly granted. The result was that they threw Jezebel out the window. In order to show disgust for this wicked woman, they used their horses to trample on her body. By the time Jehu considered that she should at least be buried, since she was a king's daughter, the dogs had already eaten most of her body. Elijah's prophecy, therefore, had been fulfilled in reference to her death (1 Kg 21:23).

Chapter 10

10:1-11 ***Ahab had seventy sons:*** It seems that Jehu had two purposes in mind in reference to his extermination of the descendants of Ahab. First, he wanted to secure his reign. Second, he wanted to bring the judgment of God on the house of Ahab for the idolatrous practices of Ahab and Jezebel. In order to accomplish these two objectives, he went to extreme measures to make sure that all the descendants of Ahab were killed. In the case of the seventy sons, he demanded the loyalty of others by asking them to execute the seventy sons. Realizing the strength of Jehu, they performed the deed and sent the heads of the seventy sons to Jehu in a basket. Jehu went beyond the descendants of Ahab in eradicating the influence of Ahab and Jezebel from Israel. He even executed all of Ahab's great men and close acquaintances, even the priests of Baal. The national cleansing of the evil influence of Ahab and Jezebel could not have been accomplished without the eradication of all those who either condoned or led in the evil. ***Jehu killed all:*** We must not make the mistake of assuming that God moved Jehu to perform these wicked deeds. God foreknew that Jehu was disposed to being such a person. Therefore, He anointed him to be king, knowing that he would take these actions against the house of Ahab. God only used the wicked actions of Jehu to bring down judgment on the house of Ahab and Jezebel.

10:12-14 ***Brethren of Ahaziah:*** Athaliah was the daughter

of Ahab. Thus these brethren would have been descendants from Ahab that came from the marriage between Ahaziah and Athaliah. Jehu's mad massacre of the descendants of Ahab was thus carried out on these forty-two men, lest they also have thoughts of conspiracy against him, or they continue to promote the evil of Ahab and Jezebel.

10:15-17 ***Jehonadab:*** This man left a heritage of obedience to God in the lives of his sons (See Jr 35). He commanded his sons to follow after the laws of God, to refrain from drinking wine, and to live in tents as the Israelites did during their wandering in the wilderness. He surely instructed his descendants to live in such a manner because of what he witnessed in the life of Jehu in his zeal to eradicate Baal worship from Israel.

10:18-28 ***Call to me all the prophets of Baal:*** In order to insure the complete eradication of Baal worship from Israel, Jehu eliminated the religious leaders of the cult. In order to do this, he improvised a scheme to have them all come together into one place. Once present, he commanded their execution. Not only did he execute those who led in Baal worship, he destroyed the temple of Baal. This destruction was so complete that to this day there remains no trace of any temple of Baal in Palestine. The statement of verse 27 was thus the legacy of Jehu. He destroyed Baal worship throughout Israel.

10:29-31 ***Jehu:*** See *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide,* Archaeology, the Bible, The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. ***Jehu took no heed to walk in the law:*** It is for this reason that we would question Jehu's true motives in reference to his eradication of all those who might threaten his reign. He knowingly sought to fulfill the prophecy of Elijah. But in doing so he was securing his reign. The fact that he did not continue with total obedience to the law of God leads us to believe that he orchestrated a limited reform, for his motives were primarily to secure his reign. He continued in the sins of Jeroboam in that he left the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. As long as these two altars remained, the twelve tribes would be thinking in the terms of two nations, not one. The sins of Jeroboam included doing anything that kept Israel divided.

10:32-36 ***The Lord began to cut off ... Israel:*** While Jehu was securing his reign in the central areas of Palestine, Hazael, king of Syria, began to bring the northern portions of Israel under Syrian control. Since all Israel would not unite under the rule of God, God allowed the nations around them to subject them to their control, and eventually He allowed all the Israelites to be taken into captivity. One reason why they became so vulnerable was that they grew to be autonomous from one another as tribes.

Chapter 11
RISE & FALL OF ATHALIAH

11:1-3 (2 Ch 22:10 – 23:21) Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab (8:18,26). As the queen of the southern kingdom, she reigned from 853 to 841 B.C. Because she was the daughter of Ahab, it seems that Jehoram, her husband, did not involve himself in the affairs of Jehu while he cleansed the northern kingdom of the descendants of Ahab. In order to secure her power, Athaliah executed all the royal family. These were the sons of Jehoram, but not the children of Athaliah. The royal seed would include the descendants of Jehoshaphat of the Davidic line. However, Jehosheba, the aunt to Joash and wife of Jehoiada (2 Ch 22:11), hid Joash away from the murderous purging of Athaliah. This action was a providential act of God in order to preserve the seedline of David, for God had promised that through David One would come to sit on his throne (See comments 2 Sm 7).

11:4-12 Through his skillful leadership, Jehoiada devised a plan by which he would overthrow Athaliah. Having hidden Joash until he matured, he then secured the loyalty of the captains and palace guard. Since his plan was to overthrow the Baal worship that was promoted by Athaliah, he was able also to secure the loyalty of the priests of Jerusalem (2 Ch 23:4). When the day came for the coronation of Joash, who was at the time seven years old, an official announcement was made with the approval of the people. Joash was thus established as king.

11:13-16 ***Treason, treason:*** Athaliah was caught off guard, and thus all her efforts to stop Jehoiada from establishing the kingship of Joash were futile. Her execution was pronounced and carried out outside the temple, lest the temple be desecrated. Thus ended the reign of a murderous woman who lived after the example of her parents, Ahab and Jezebel.

11:17-21 ***The house of Baal:*** The very existence of a temple that was constructed for the worship of Baal reveals the extent to which the southern kingdom went into apostasy during the reign of Athaliah. Solomon had built a temple to God. When the influence of Baal became so strong in Judah, then the people demanded that a temple be built to Baal. Temples are not built for practical reasons, but as idols through which men worship their gods. The reforms of Jehoiada, therefore, were for the purpose of restoring Judah's covenant relationship with God, lest they also follow after the idolatrous example of the northern kingdom.

Chapter 12
REIGN OF JOASH

12:1-3 (2 Ch 24:1-17) ***Jehoash:*** This is a variant spelling for the name, Joash. Since he began his reign as a seven-year-old boy, the authority of his reign rested in Jehoiada who was the high priest at the time. Since Jehoash's early reign was probably confined to Jerusalem, Judah failed to take away the high places where people continued to sacrifice and burn incense in idolatrous worship in the rural areas (2 Ch 24:15-22).

12:4-8 Athaliah's focus on the worship of Baal and upkeep of her temple of Baal had led to the neglect of the temple of God. She had even taken articles from the temple of God to be used in the temple of Baal (2 Ch 24:7). And thus, the temple of God needed much repair. Funds were sourced from the census assessment (Ex 30:23), the redemption money (Nm 18:15,16), and the freewill offerings. Regardless of their zeal, by the twenty-third year of the reign of Jehoash the priests were not able to complete the repair of the temple.

12:9-16 ***Chest:*** An effort was made to increase the freewill offerings. When those who came to the temple realized

that there was a lack of funds for completing the repair, they willingly gave into the chest their freewill contributions. Sufficient funds were thus raised in order to complete the repair. As the workers pointed out the specific repairs that needed to be made, the people gave to complete what was identified to be repaired. ***There were not made ... bowls ... snuffers ... basins:*** This statement of verse 13 refers to the time when the repairs were being made. However, the 2 Chronicles 24:14 account refers to the time when the repairs were completed, and then the articles for the temple were made. ***Trespass money:*** See Lv 6:2-6; Nm 6:6-8. ***Sin money:*** The priest was not to receive a gift in reference to the sin offering. It may have become a custom, however, to give the priest something for his trouble in carrying out the sin offering (See Nm 5:10).

12:17-21 When Hazael, king of Syria, became a threat to Jerusalem, Joash took the treasures of the temple and royal palace and gave them to Hazael as tribute, though we are not told if this was a continual payment (2 Ch 24:23,24). ***His servants ... made a conspiracy:*** It may have been that after the death of Jehoiada that Joash gave himself over to worship idol gods (See 2 Ch 24:15-22). If this were the case, then he would have betrayed the very reason for his kingship. Those who were in charge of the spiritual leadership of Israel rebelled against him.

Chapter 13
REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ

13:1-9 The writer at this point returns to a history of the northern kingdom. The reign of Jehoahaz was from 814 to 798 B.C. Verse 1 states that Jehoahaz in the north began to reign in the 23rd year of Joash in the south. He reigned seventeen years. Jehoahaz thus reigned until the 39th or 40th year of Joash. But verse 10 states that he died and his son Jehoash succeeded him in the 37th year of Joash. We would thus understand the reign of Jehoahaz in verse 1 as a coregent reign in the latter years of his reign, whereas in verse 10 emphasis was on the total length of his reign. ***Evil in the sight of the Lord:*** Jehoahaz perpetuated the sins of Jeroboam, and thus his reign was tarnished with sin. As a king, he could not lead Israel to withstand the attacks of Hazael, king of Syria. ***Dwelt in their tents:*** It seems that Hazael had taken the cities, and thus relegated the Israelites to living as they did in the wilderness. They lived in tents in the rural areas, whereas Hazael controlled the cities.

DEATH OF ELISHA

13:10-19 (14:15,16) In the record of Joash's reign, the beginning of his reign (vss 10,11) is immediately followed by the conclusion of his reign (vss 12,13), which conclusion is again stated in verses 14:15,16. ***O my father:*** Contrary to many kings of the northern kingdom, Joash had great respect for Elisha. In his last prophecy concerning Israel's confrontation with Syria, Elisha asked Joash to shoot an arrow toward the east, symbolizing Israel's victory in Aphek. When Joash was asked to strike the ground, the number of times that he struck the ground with his arrows would indicate how many times he would strike Syria. Unfortunately, he did not strike the ground more than three times. He would thus not be able to completely destroy the threat of Syria.

13:20-25 ***Raiding parties:*** These Moabite raids were not on the cities, but on the farms. They raided the farms for food. ***Touched the bones of Elisha:*** Though dead, God continued to work through Elisha. The miracle was possibly given for the purpose of reassuring Joash that God would bring about the words that Elisha had spoken concerning his victories over Syria. These victories took place after the death of Hazael, for Israel was able to recover the cities from Ben-hadad, the son of Hazael, that Hazael had earlier taken from Israel. ***Ben-hadad:*** This would be Ben-hadad III, the son of Hazael. The Tell al-Rimah Stele of Adadnirari III, who was king of Assyria during these years, mentions Jehoash and Ben-hadad III. The inscription of this archaeological discovery also mentions the fact that Adadnirari received tribute from Mari of Damascus and "Joash, the Samaritan." ***Lord was gracious:*** Because of His covenant with the fathers of Israel (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), God spared Israel at this time in their apostasy. They were not spared because of any righteousness on their part. They were spared because of God's promise to their fathers. God often has compassion on the children for the sake of the fathers. In this case, it was His mercy on an entire nation because of His promise that He made to a nation.

Decline And Fall Of The Northern Kingdom (14:1 – 17:41)

Outline: (1) Reign of Amaziah (14:1-22), (2) Social decay in the north (14:23 – 15:38), (3) Reigns of Ahaz and Hoshea (16:1 – 17:41)

Chapter 14
REIGN OF AMAZIAH

14:1-4 (2 Ch 25:1-28) ***Amaziah:*** Amaziah began his reign in the north in 796 B.C. and reigned until 767 B.C. It is stated that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not as David. Though it is not explained what he did right, we assume that he did not serve the Lord with all his heart. He possibly did allowed the worship of Baal, and thus led the people away from God. Nevertheless, he did not remove the places of false worship.

14:5-7 ***Did not kill the ... murderers:*** See Dt 24:16. ***The book of the law of Moses:*** This reference, with the one in 1 Kings 2:3, affirms the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Since no other person is given credit for writing the first five books of the Bible, then we must assume that this inspired affirmation is sufficient to credit Moses with the inspired authorship of Genesis through Deuteronomy. ***Took Selah by war:*** See 2 Ch 25:3-13. Selah was the capital of Edom (Is 16:1), which today is referred to as Petra (See Ob 1-4). The result of this war was that Edom became the vassal of Judah.

14:8-16 ***Let us look one another in the face:*** This was an invitation for war against the northern kingdom. It was possibly made in response to raids that the northern kingdom had made on the northern cities of Judah (2 Ch 25:1-13). ***The thistle:*** This fable of Jehoash was delivered to Amaziah in order that he back down from this threat. It seems that Amaziah's

victory over the Edomites had made him over confident. But Amaziah would not listen. As a result, Jehoash defeated the army of Amaziah, pursuing him even to Jerusalem. Jehoash then plundered the national treasury of the royal palace and temple. What had now happened in the history of Israel as a whole was that the two kingdoms of Israel, the north and south, had alienated themselves from one another to the point that they would go to war against one another. The time of this battle between Jehoash and Amaziah was about 65 years from the captivity of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians that occurred in 722/21 B.C. Now that Israel was at war with itself, the northern kingdom easily became the prey of the Assyrian Empire that was beginning to spread from the northeast of Palestine. The destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel loomed in the air as they sunk deeper into apostasy.

14:17-22 ***A conspiracy:*** We are not told the reason for this conspiracy. However, some have assumed that it was because of Amaziah's weakness in his war with Jehoash. He was unwise in going to war against the northern kingdom, and subsequently humiliated Judah when the north plundered the treasures of the royal palace and temple. Since many in Judah were still trying to remain faithful to the Lord, some have also suggested that the real reason why Amaziah was killed was because of his apostasy to serve other gods (See 2 Ch 25:27).

SOCIAL DECAY IN THE NORTH

14:23-29 ***Jeroboam:*** This was Jeroboam II who reigned in the northern kingdom from 782 to 753 B.C. Because he was a wise military leader, and a good administrator in government, Jeroboam took the northern kingdom to the zenith of its prosperity and power. He led the north in reclaiming much of the territory that was lost to the Syrians. Unfortunately, he continued in the sins of Jeroboam I in maintaining a separation between the north and south by promoting loyalty to the altars at Bethel and Dan. ***Jonah:*** This would be the prophet Jonah who wrote the book of Jonah. ***He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam:*** At this time in history, God saved Israel from total destruction through the leadership of Jeroboam II, thus fulfilling the prophecy of 13:5. Unfortunately, from the time of the death of Jeroboam II Israel began to decline, a decline that would lead to her destruction that would come only about thirty years after Jeroboam died.

Chapter 15

15:1-7 (2 Ch 26:1-23) ***Azariah:*** Azariah reigned in the southern kingdom from 767 to 740 B.C. He was also referred to as Uzziah (2 Ch 26; Is 1:1; 6:1). The name "Azariah" means "the Lord helps" and the name "Uzziah" means "the Lord strengthens." In 14:22 it is stated that he reclaimed Elath that was Solomon's port city in the Gulf of Aqabah (1 Kg 9:26). He led Israel with a strong army (2 Ch 26:6-15). Because God struck him with leprosy, Jotham, his son, administrated both his house and the nation in his later years. When he died, Jotham became the king of Judah. ***Leper:*** 2 Chronicles 26:16-23 explains that God struck Azariah with leprosy because of his presumptuous actions that he did in the temple (Compare Lv 13:45,46). ***The high places were not removed:*** There was great social attachment to the high places of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel (See introductory notes). The use of the high places is not clear, other than the fact that they were places to which people went for the sacrificial offerings that were made, and the worship that was associated with other gods. They were thus places where the people lost their focus on God as the only true and living God, and focused on their own carnal desires and beliefs. The temples of Baal were often destroyed by the reforming leaders of the north and south, but the high places remained. It may have been that because the people enjoyed the high places for their immoral and apostate practices that it was a political move to allow them to remain, though the temples to the false gods were often destroyed in the cities during the restorations of some kings. The high places were possibly used primarily by the rural people to focus on false religious behavior, and the temples were used by the urban people.

15:8-22 ***Zechariah ... reigned:*** Zechariah's reign was short lived. This was the beginning of the end of the northern kingdom. ***Shallum:*** After six months as king, Zechariah was assassinated by Shallum. This conspiracy began a decline in the stability of the leadership of the northern kingdom. This was one factor that led to the downfall of the north. Zechariah's assassination signaled the end of the house of Jehu, thus fulfilling the prophecy concerning his household (10:30). ***Menahem:*** Menahem, a cruel military leader, assassinated Shallum. He subsequently reigned from 752 to 742 B.C. During the reign of Menahem, the Assyrians, under the leadership of Shalmaneser (858-824 B.C.) and Adadnirari (805-782 B.C.), were expanding the Assyrian Empire to the west and south. ***Pul:*** This is the Babylonian name for the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser. Since Menahem knew that he could not win in a military conflict with the Assyrians, he subjugated the rich in Israel to heavy taxation in order to pay tribute to Assyria.

15:23-26 ***Pekahiah:*** This son of Menahem reigned in the north for only two years from 742 to 740 B.C. However, it seems that the rich, who were subjected to the high taxation of Menahem, rebelled against his reign. One of his captains, Pekah, was thus aided in an insurrection against Pekahiah, murdering Pekahiah in the process. Pekah subsequently reigned from 740 to 732 B.C.

15:27-31 ***Captive to Assyria:*** The Assyrians introduced a new foreign policy in their conquest of nations. They took captives of conquered peoples as slaves back to their homeland. In this case Tiglath-pileser assaulted the northern kingdom, defeated Pekah's army, and then took Israelites captive back to Assyria (See 17:6). ***Hoshea:*** Because of Pekah's defeat by the Assyrians, Hoshea conspired against him in order to bring Israel under the control of Assyria.

15:32-38 (2 Ch 27:1-8) ***Jotham:*** Jotham reigned in the southern kingdom from 740 to 732 B.C., though he reigned coregently with Uzziah from 750 to 740 B.C. ***In those days the Lord began to send ... Rezin ... and Pekah:*** With the conquest of Assyria over Israel through the leadership of Tiglath-pileser, the end of the northern kingdom loomed in the near future. These events are recorded from 2 Kings 15:27 to 17:1. Because of the brevity of what is recorded, it is sometimes dif-

ficult to picture all that went on during these years of national chaos. In reference to the 2 Kings record, the events of 15:32 – 16:18 occurred before the events that are recorded in 15:29. 2 Kings 15:32 – 16:18 explain in greater detail the brief mention of historical events in 15:29. According to the listing of Assyrian kings, the Tiglath-pileser who is mentioned here in the biblical text was Tiglath-pileser III. There is a great deal of archaeological evidence in reference to the exploits of the Assyrian Empire at this time in the history of the world. Tiglath-pileser III revived the Assyrian Empire at this time in history. Information in his personal annals of Assyrian history mention that he defeated a coalition of kings that was led by Azariah, the Judean king. This decisive victory took place in the middle of the 8th century B.C. This was the time when the northern kingdom, under Menahem, was subjected to pay tribute to Assyria (15:19). Following these events, Pekah of the north apparently formed an alliance with Rezin of Syria in order to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Pekah and Rezin also made a move against Judah (16:5; Is 7:1-17) while Tiglath-pileser was occupied with taking Uartu. It is possible that these two kings, Pekah and Rezin, coerced Philistia and Edom to join with them in their campaign against Assyria, and possibly Judah (15:37). However, Jotham would not join the coalition, assuming that the end of the northern kingdom was imminent. Pekah and Rezin subsequently made war with Judah during the reign of Ahaz, which war is called the Syro-Ephraimite War (16:5; Is 7:1,2). The war of Pekah and Rezin against Ahaz motivated Ahaz to send a gift to Tiglath-pileser in order to gain his support against Pekah and Rezin (16:7-9). Subsequently, Tiglath-pileser attacked Syria (16:9). He then moved against the northern kingdom of Israel. This was when Tiglath-pileser carried away captives of the north into Assyrian captivity (15:29). The cost to Ahaz for buying the support of the Assyrians was that Assyrian gods were introduced into the worship of Judah as a political move to continue the security that came with an alliance with Assyria (16:10-18). This weakened the commitment of the south to God, which would later lead to its downfall. But in the north, Tiglath-pileser III began the downfall of Israel, which was later finalized by Shalmaneser III, who followed Tiglath-pileser to the throne of Assyria.

Chapter 16
REIGNS OF AHAZ & HOSHEA

16:1-4 (2 Ch 28:1-17) ***Ahaz:*** Ahaz reigned in Judah from 732 to 716 B.C. Under the reigns of Azariah and Jotham, Judah experienced a period of prosperity and national confidence. It was a time of luxury and self-sufficiency during which Isaiah and other prophets preached to a society that trusted in the material security of their wealth (Is 2–6). It was a time of apostasy that was supported by the security of a materialistic life-style among the leaders of the nation. God thus sent the coalition of Rezin and Pekah against Judah as punishment for their indifference toward the law of God (15:37; 2 Ch 28:5-7). In his arrogance, and refusal to turn to God, Ahaz went to the Assyrians, a foreign power, in order to be delivered from the threat of Israel and Syria. Judah's coalition with a foreign power marked the end of Judah, for it manifested their trust in men and not in God. They had thus become a secular nation where God was divorced from the leadership of the people. ***Made his son pass through the fire:*** Ahaz worshiped Molech with human sacrifice, a practice that was vehemently condemned by the prophets (23:10; Ps 106:38; Jr 7:31; Ez 16:21).

16:5-9 The Syro-Ephraimatic War lasted for some time. However, Rezin and Pekah were not successful in their attack against Jerusalem because of the strong fortifications of the city. ***Edomites:*** Some translations read, "Syrians." However, the stronger manuscript evidence supports the reading, "Edomites," which most modern translations use. ***The treasury:*** The royal house and temple were used as the central banks of the kingdoms. Through taxation, storage was made of gold and silver in the royal houses and temples of the nations. Throughout the history of Israel, the stores of wealth in Jerusalem were often plundered by foreign kings or used by the kings of Judah to buy the allegiance of foreign powers (See 12:18; 1 Kg 14:26; 15:18). ***Killed Rezin:*** Tiglath-pileser killed the king of Syria, and thus Syria was no longer a buffer nation that stood between Assyria and the northern kingdom of Israel.

16:10-20 ***He saw an altar:*** On his visit to meet with Tiglath-pileser in Damascus, Ahaz liked an altar there that had been built for sacrifices to pagan gods. He had a copy of this altar built in the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem. It could have been that he was also introducing into the worship of Israel the gods of the Assyrians and Syrians. Since the worship of a foreign god was a political practice that manifested one's allegiance to the nation of the god, we could assume that at this time Ahaz was showing his allegiance to the Assyrians by building a copy of the Assyrian altar. ***Because of the king of Assyria:*** There may have been political reasons why Ahaz introduced the religious influence of Assyria into Judean religious ceremonies. This would not have been difficult for Ahaz to do since he had gone to the extremity of honoring the god of Molech.

Chapter 17

17:1-4 ***Hoshea:*** Hoshea reigned in the north from 732 to the time of the fall of Samaria in 722/21 B.C. He was the last king of the northern kingdom. This chapter ends the history of the northern kingdom that was started with the reign of Jeroboam in 931 B.C. The historical lesson here is significant. The history of Israel began with their exodus from Egypt in 1445 B.C. It ended with the coming of the Messiah when all men were brought together into the spiritual nation of Israel, the church, wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gl 3:26-29). Within this period of time, the northern kingdom of Israel existed for a brief period from the division of the kingdom of Israel as a whole in 930 at the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam to the time they fell to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. Thus in a period of 210 years the nation came to an end after dividing itself from Judah. The brevity of its existence in reference to the 1445 years of Israelite history exemplifies the curse of idolatrous state religion that Jeroboam

introduced among God's people. ***Not as the kings of Israel who were before him:*** This could be a reference to Hoshea allowing people to go to Jerusalem for the Passover, which thing was discouraged by other kings of Israel. One of the sins of Jeroboam was to discourage people from going for the temple sacrifices in Jerusalem. He built the altars in Bethel and Dan in order to provide an alternative, and thus fostered the continued division of Israel by keeping worshipers away from Jerusalem. Kings after Jeroboam continued this policy, and thus "the sins of Jeroboam," which God never intended by giving Jeroboam the northern ten tribes, included a prohibition of people from going to Jerusalem. But according to 2 Chronicles 30 Hoshea allowed such (2 Ch 30:10-27). ***Shalmaneser:*** See the Encyclopedic Study Guide, Archaeology and the Bible, B, The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. Shalmaneser followed Tiglath-pileser to the throne of Assyria. ***So, king of Egypt:*** Some in Israel convinced Hoshea to discontinue paying tribute to Assyria. Their confidence was probably in an alliance they made with So. But the alliance failed and Hoshea was imprisoned by the Assyrians.

17:5,6 Only two verses of scripture are given to the tragic end of 210 years of history of the northern kingdom. What Jeroboam had started in rebellion against Rehoboam ended in national tragedy with the carrying away of Israelites out of their promised land into a foreign country. All was the fulfillment of prophecy, and the work of God to punish His people for living after their own desires and not after His commandments. ***The king of Assyria:*** It is not clear in history whether reference here was to Shalmaneser or Sargon II. The archaeological discovery of the Babylonian Chronicle gives credit to Shalmaneser for the victory. When considering all historical records, it seems that Shalmaneser began the three-year battle against Samaria, but died before the city was finally taken. Sargon II finished the siege, and thus took credit for defeating Samaria. The date for the fall is usually given as 722/21 B.C. The fall of the northern kingdom is given as 722/21 B.C. with the fall of Samaria, though Assyria had earlier subjugated northern areas of Israel before this date. ***Halah ... Habor ... cities of the Medes:*** Following the practice that was started by Tiglath-pileser, the king of Assyria took captives from Israel and moved them to different regions throughout the Assyrian Empire. What the Bible student must remember is that when the Babylonian Empire eventually overcame the Assyrian Empire in the years to come, Babylon assumed control of these territories of the Assyrians. When the time came for the return of the remnant of Israel from captivity, there was a remnant of the northern tribes in Halah, Habor, and the cities of the Medes who returned to the land of Palestine. And thus, a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel returned to the land of promise in order to await the coming of the promised Messiah and Savior of the world.

17:7-23 ***Pass through the fire:*** Though in occult worship some gave their young children as offerings, others evidently forced their children who were older to walk through coals of fire in order to prove their loyalty to false gods. Though not necessarily connected with the worship of false gods, this practice still exist today in various cultures of the world among some who seek to prove their mental strength. ***Yet the Lord testified against Israel:*** The historical lesson is that throughout the centuries, cultures progressively become more wicked. They do not develop higher moral standards. When people seek to follow after their own lusts, they will refuse to hear the word of God, and thus digress into moral decay. ***Feared other gods:*** They created imagined gods in their minds that they believed existed. They thus walked in the fear of their own minds, for they made themselves the center of their own desires. Idolatry is the desire to live according to one's own self by imagining gods and spirits in one's own mind. ***Statutes of the nations:*** Instead of cleansing the land of the nations who obeyed customs that were contrary to the will of God, they compromised with the nations, and thus fell under the influence of sinful foreign customs. ***Did secretly:*** They thought they could sin without the knowledge of the omnipresent God of heaven. ***Built ... high places:*** Not only did they fail to tear down these centers where worship was conducted to false gods, they built their own. ***Two calves:*** These were the golden calves in Bethel and Dan that Jeroboam had made in order to keep the people from going to the annual sacrifices in Jerusalem. ***Images:*** After the spirit of idol worship, they formed with their hands physical representations of the gods they imagined in their minds. ***Provoke the Lord to anger:*** They were not ignorant of the law, for the prophets spoke throughout their apostasy. They arrogantly chose not to obey the One who formed them as a nation by delivering them from the bondage of Egypt. They refused to repent (Is 55:6,7). ***Carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day***: From this statement we would conclude that 1 & 2 Kings were written sometime after 722/21 B.C., but before the return from the Babylonian exile that occurred in 536 B.C. Somewhere during this 185 year period these two books, and possibly 1 & 2 Chronicles, were written in order to warn the returning exiles never to walk in the sins that led them into captivity. Because the returning exiles never again appointed for themselves a king on earth, or followed after idolatry, then we would assume that they learned from their history.

17:24-28 ***Assyria brought people from Babylon ... Cuthah ... Ava ... Hamath ... Sepharvaim:*** Not only did the Assyrians take captives from the lands they conquered and scatter them among the territory of their Empire, they also transplanted other people from their Empire into the lands they conquered. The reason for this was to break down the national loyalty of the people. They assimilated cultures with one another in order to lessen the threat of revolt against the Empire. What also happened during this cultural mixing was that the gods of the peoples of different lands were integrated into the religion of each group of people. The result of the mixing of the races in this case produced what later became known as the Samaritans. These were a racial cross between the Israelites who were left in the land of Palestine and the other races of people who were brought into Palestine by the Assyrians. ***The Lord sent lions:*** Because those who were brought into the land did not know or fear the God of heaven, God allowed the population of lions in the depopulated land to increase. The land, therefore, became a dangerous place in which to live. ***Teach***

them the custom of the god of the land: Because the Assyrians concluded that the lion attacks were the result of the God of the land who was punishing the people, he commissioned that a Levite priest be sent to the land to teach the people the commandments of God. We would assume, therefore, that the faith of the Samaritans that existed at the time when the Jews returned from captivity in 586 B.C. came as a result of the teaching of this one Levite priest who was sent to teach the people in the land of Palestine after the captivity of the northern kingdom. We must never underestimate the power of the word of God in the hands of just one person.

17:29-33 ***Every nation made gods of their own:*** The lone Levite priest who was sent to teach the people the law of God had competition. We must not underestimate the initiative of people to create gods after their own imaginations. What seemed to have happened in this case was that the people who were transplanted in the land mixed their beliefs with the word of God. ***Succoth-benoth:*** We know little about this Babylonian god. ***Nergal:*** This male god was originally associated with the sun and fire. He was then made the god of war and hunting, and later the god of disasters. ***Ashima:*** This was the god of the Hamathites and may have been associated with the Asherah. ***Nibhaz and Tartak:*** We know little about these two gods. Some have suggested that Nibhaz originated from Elam and that Tartak was a Syrian goddess. ***Adrammelech:*** This god was associated with the Sumero-Akkadian god, Anu, which was associated with human sacrifice. Since these gods were the religious reflection of the culture of the people who had imagined them, then what Israel did was allow the culture of the people to influence them. Instead of being influenced by the word of God, they allowed others to dominate their beliefs and behavior. ***Burned their children in fire:*** This would be the practice of offering small children as burnt offerings to false gods. Similar practices prevail today among witch doctors and tribal groups who steal away small children in order to use various body parts for spiritualistic ceremonies.

17:34-41 The attempt to teach the Samaritans the law of God was only partially successful. The religious beliefs of the people who were imported into Palestine were too strong. The result was a mixture of truth and error. Thus unto the time 1 & 2 Kings were written, the people continued to believe in the gods of the lands from which they originated. However, in many ways they also accepted belief in the God of Israel because of the teaching of the Levite priest who was sent to teach the word of God. But what they did was add the God of Israel to their polytheistic system of belief in many gods. ***As did their fathers:*** The fathers established belief and behavior that was continued through their children. In a world where obedience to God is often difficult, if the fathers do not set an example of obedience to God, then the children have little chance of being faithful. For this reason, the fathers must be obedient students of the word of God in their lives for the sake of their children.

Decline And Fall Of The Southern Kingdom (18:1 – 25:30)

Outline: (1) Reign of Hezekiah (18:1 – 20:21), (2) Reigns of Manasseh and Amon (21:1-26), (3) Reformation of Josiah (22:1 – 23:30), (4) National turmoil and captivity (23:31 – 24:20), (5) Fall of Jerusalem (25:1-30)

Chapter 18
REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

18:1-8 (2 Ch 29:1 – 32:32; Is 36 – 39) ***Hezekiah:*** Hezekiah reigned over the southern kingdom from 716 to 687 B.C. His reign is explained almost equally in the accounts of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles and Isaiah. ***He removed the high places:*** Hezekiah's reign was considered righteous before God because of his trust in God and the extent to which he restored Judah to God. He not only made reforms in the cities, but also in the rural areas by removing the high places where wicked retreats were conducted to false gods. ***Nehushtan:*** Since the meaning of this name is "the bronze thing," we could assume that this was a derogatory reference of Hezekiah toward this relic of the past (Nm 21:8,9). The fact that the people made it an object of religious respect teaches that God's people should never be left some relic of the past that He used in His work with His people. Men often have an uncontrolled desire to place an object before them that reminds them of their relationship with God and encourages their faith. Spiritually minded people do not need such objects. Disciples are to be known by their love for one another (Jn 13:34,35). ***The Lord was with him:*** God is with those who make a total commitment to serve Him. In this context, the commitment of Hezekiah was manifested by what he did in restoring the people to God. Commitment must be manifested by the works of those who seek to restore themselves to God. Corrections in theology, though necessary, are not sufficient alone. God is with those who take action for Him. ***Against ... Assyria:*** At first he was probably against Sennacherib, but after the death of Sennacherib, his revolt was against Sargon.

18:9-12 See 17:1-6. ***Because they did not obey:*** The reason is given for the downfall of the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom fell as a people of God because they refused to be faithful to the commandments of God. They created and obeyed their own commandments, and thus created their own false gods whom they assumed would condone their sin. ***King of Assyria:*** Since Shalmaneser died before the battle against Samaria was completed, the "king of Assyria" that is mentioned in verse 11 would be Sargon II. By the time of Assyria's attack of the southern kingdom in verse 13, Sargon had died and Sennacherib was king of Assyria. ***Cities of the Medes:*** We must keep in mind that in the Assyrian captivity some of the northern ten tribes of Israel were taken into lands of captivity that were later taken over by the Babylonian Empire, which was subsequently taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire. When the southern kingdom of Israel fell in 586 B.C., and subsequently taken into Babylonian captivity, the land of the Medes to which they were taken was part of the Babylonian Empire. Therefore, there were Jews from the northern kingdom already in the land of the Medes when the captives of the southern kingdom arrived as captives after 586 B.C. When King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire allowed the Jews to return to Palestine after the seventy years of captivity,

a remnant of all twelve tribes return to rebuild the temple (See comments of Ezra).

18:13-16 ***Sennacherib:*** The two kings of Assyria, Sargon and Sennacherib, left many annals concerning their military campaigns into Palestine. These archaeological discoveries have aided our understanding of the conflicts between Assyria and Judah (See *Encyclopedic Study Guide*, Archaeology and the Bible, D, E, and F). ***Sennacherib ... came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them:*** When Sargon was killed in battles in the land of Tabal, revolts started in the Mediterranean regions where Assyria had formerly conquered several small nations. Hezekiah was one who joined in these revolts against the Assyrians (vss 7,8). At the same time, Merodach-baladan was leading the rise of the Babylonian Empire. He also encouraged other nations to rebel against Assyria (20:12-19; Is 39). These revolts occurred at the beginning of the 8th century B.C. In 701 B.C. Sennacherib, who succeeded Sargon, determined to subdue these revolts. It was during this time that Sennacherib came against the cities of Judah. When Sennacherib initially defeated Tyre, then the city-states, except Ashkelon, Ekron and Jerusalem, submitted to pay tribute to Assyria. However, Sennacherib eventually crushed Ashkelon, and then intended to do the same with Ekron. The Philistines then made an alliance with Shabaka of Egypt, who in turn called for reinforcements from Ethiopia. But Sennacherib defeated this coalition of nations at Eltekah, north of Ekron. After his conquest of Eltekah, Timnath and Ekron, Sennacherib headed for Jerusalem. Before arriving at Jerusalem, he engaged Lachish, a well-fortified city that was at the time larger than Jerusalem. On the wall reliefs of the temple-palace of Nineveh, archaeologists have discovered a description of how Sennacherib defeated Lachish. When Hezekiah realized that Sennacherib could not be stopped, he submitted. As a result, Sennacherib laid on them a heavy tribute, which Hezekiah paid. However, in order to pay this tribute, Hezekiah had to strip all the treasures of the temple, even taking the gold that overlaid the doors and doorposts. It is assumed that this completed the first invasion of Sennacherib to the land of Judah. Another was to follow, during which the army of Sennacherib would be slain by an angel of God.

18:17,18 ***The king of Assyria sent Tartan:*** Some have affirmed that there was a period of about twelve years between verses 16 and 17, and thus the narrative that follows is the description of a second invasion into Palestine by the Assyrian army. The reason for this assumption is that in the first invasion, Hezekiah submitted to Sennacherib and paid tribute (vss 13-16). In the context of the communications from 18:17 to 19:37, mention is made of Hezekiah paying tribute. During this second confrontation with Sennacherib beginning with verse 17, Isaiah is with Hezekiah, and thus Hezekiah is defiant to the proposals made by Sennacherib. The second reason why this was probably a second invasion is in the fact that Tirhakah (19:9) was an Ethiopian. In archaeological discoveries he was a coregent ruler of Egypt with his brother Shebitko in 690/689 B.C. Therefore, he could not have been in power to lead Egyptian forces into Palestine as early as 701 B.C. The Egyptian army that Sennacherib engaged at Eltekah was not the same army that was led by Tirhakah. A third reason why this narrative would be considered a second invasion is in the nature of the messages of Isaiah. Messages that Isaiah pronounced from around 705 to 701 indicate that Isaiah was against Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria (See Is 28:14-22; 30:1-17; 31:1-3). However, other messages indicate that God would break the yoke of Assyria, which messages were directed to Judah concerning Assyria's second invasion (See Is 10:24-27; 14:24-27; 29:5-8). This was Hezekiah's message to Sennacherib on this occasion (19:20-34). Add to this the fact that the threat of Sennacherib against Jerusalem was suddenly terminated on this occasion with the death of 185,000 of his men. Since after the first invasion, Hezekiah sent tribute to Nineveh, no such tribute would have been sent after the sudden death of the army of Sennacherib that is explained in this account. The date for this encounter was around 688 B.C. ***Lachish:*** This was an ideal location from which the Assyrian army could bring under control threats from Egypt, as well as bring under subjection again the rebelling cities of Judah. ***Tartan:*** This was a title, not a name. He was the general of the Assyrian army (Is 20:1). ***Rabsaris:*** This title could have referred to the captain of the king's bodyguard (Jr 39:3,13). ***Rabshakeh:*** This was the spokesman for Sennacherib.

18:19-25 ***This bruised reed:*** Rabshakeh arrogantly ridiculed Hezekiah's alliance with Egypt, which he referred to as a broken staff upon which one should not rest for security. ***Pharaoh:*** This would have been Tirhakah (or, Taharqo) who was a coregent with his brother in 690/89 B.C (19:9). ***The Lord said to me:*** In order to discourage Hezekiah, Rabshakeh claimed to be on a mission from God, which, if he had known of Isaiah's message of Isaiah 10:5-11, he most certainly was. But it was not God's mission for Assyria to take Jerusalem at this time. That mission would be assigned to the Babylonians. All of what Rabshakeh said to Hezekiah was from the typical Assyrian position of being arrogant against those whom they sought to conquer. However, at this time in the history of Judah, through the faith of Hezekiah, and with the backing of Isaiah, Judah stood firm in her revolt against the Assyrian Empire. It was not the time when God would take the southern kingdom into captivity. God did not want the southern kingdom to be taken to the same regions as the northern kingdom, but into the regions of Babylonia. We must keep in mind that in the captivities God was establishing Jews throughout the ancient world in order to set the stage for the evangelization of the world after the establishment of the church in Acts 2. In the land to which the Jews were scattered, they maintained their faith, and hope of the Messiah. When the gospel was first preached by the early evangelists in the 1st century, they went first to the synagogues of the Jews in the lands to which they had been taken captive.

18:26,27 ***The Syrian language:*** This would be Aramaic, and is thus confirmed here as the official international language of the day. ***The Jews' language:*** This would be Hebrew, but specifically the dialect of Hebrew that was spoken by those in Judah at the time of this encounter with the Assyrians.

18:28-37 The content of Rabshakeh's speech to the people

was to give them the alternative of living in Assyria in captivity as opposed to the consequences of resistance against Sennacherib. Assyria's conquest of all the cities he mentioned in this context, as well as the fall of Samaria, would certainly be discouraging to the Israelites who were held up in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Hezekiah stood firm, trusting the message of Isaiah that Sennacherib would not enter the city. Though he did not understand the message of Isaiah, he had faith in the message of God. ***With their clothes torn:*** These were times for faith and leadership. Hezekiah manifested both to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Though Eliakim and Shebna expressed their deep discouragement as a result of the words of Rabshakeh, Hezekiah did not move from his determination to trust in God to deliver Judah from the threat of the Assyrian Empire.

Chapter 19

19:1-7 ***He tore his clothes:*** The message from Rabshakeh not only discouraged Eliakim and Shebna who reported it to Hezekiah, it also greatly discouraged Hezekiah. ***Isaiah the prophet:*** Though Hezekiah had launched out on faith, the message of Rabshakeh brought a reasonable conclusion to any resistance to Sennacherib. Any city without the help of God would fall to the Assyrians. Hezekiah thus needed reassurance, and for this reason, he sent to Isaiah who was also in the city. ***Prayer for the remnant:*** Hezekiah had been listening to the prophets, for they were saying that God would spare a remnant of His people. The northern kingdom had already gone into captivity. Only Judah, with Benjamin, was left. Hezekiah considered Judah the remnant that was left in the land. But even Judah would eventually be taken into captivity. Only a remnant of them would eventually return to Palestine with a remnant from each of the northern tribes. ***Hear a rumor ... fall by the sword:*** We are not told from where he would hear the rumor, or what rumor would be heard. The result of his hearing the rumor would be his return to his own land where he would be killed.

19:8-13 ***King of Ethiopia:*** The word "Ethiopia" stands for Egypt, and thus some translations will read "king of Egypt." Sennacherib had gone from Lachish to Libnah. Tirhakah was seeking to come to the rescue of Hezekiah, but Sennacherib sent another dispatch to Hezekiah, saying that Egypt would offer no help. Sennacherib's message revealed that Assyria had a formidable army that no nation at the time could defeat. Sennacherib's offer to Hezekiah, therefore, was reasonable. The inhabitants of Jerusalem could exchange captivity for death. Surrender was better than resistance in view of such a great army. But because of his belief in the deliverance of God, Hezekiah was willing to risk the lives of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. These were times when the greatness of Hezekiah's leadership was revealed.

19:14-19 ***God ... of all the kingdoms of the earth:*** The theology of this statement is profound. It is one that must never be forgotten when studying the Old Testament history of the nation of Israel. We must not assume that God was concerned only with Israel. He was King of kings, and Lord of lords over all His creation. As revealed through His commission of Jonah to Nineveh, God was the God of the Assyrian Empire that was at this time seeking to destroy Israel. Though men have throughout the ages created gods after their own rebellious imaginations, God is still the one true and living God. Israel was chosen only for the purpose of preserving a segment of world society in order to bring the Messiah into the world for the salvation of all the world. Jesus was not the Messiah for the Jews only, but also for the Gentiles. He was given by God to "whosoever" believes (Jn 3:16). ***Ear ... eyes:*** These were metaphors, or anthropomorphisms. This figure of speech uses a physical characteristic of man in reference to God who is spirit (Jn 4:24). God who is spirit has no physical ears and eyes, and thus the symbols refer to God responding to Hezekiah's plea and seeing the deplorable situation of Judah. ***For they were not gods:*** The existence of the nation of Israel, born out of Egyptian captivity, was evidence that Israel could never have become a nation if it had not been for the work of God. Other nations first existed, and then they created their gods after their imaginations. They then formed their gods in stone and wood by the work of their hands. But the God of Israel first existed, created all things, and then formed Israel by bringing her out of Egyptian captivity. We must not miss Hezekiah's argument here for the existence of God through the existence of Israel. Misguided societies create their own gods. God created His own society of Israel.

19:20-34 This stern message of rebuke and chastisement certainly stunned the arrogant and proud Sennacherib. This was a message where Judah revealed her contempt and scorn for Assyria. Sennacherib had been mocking the insignificant army of Judah that was held up behind the walls of Jerusalem. However, God's message reversed the feelings of contempt and scorn. These were feelings that should be expressed by Judah toward the Assyrians who had no business threatening God's people. In fact, Sennacherib's contempt and scorn of Judah was viewed as contempt and scorn against the God of all creation. Those who do not know the one true and living God will behave in such a manner. In their ignorance and arrogance they condemn themselves through their mockery of God's work through His people. ***Holy One of Israel:*** See Is 5:24; 30:12. ***I will turn you back:*** See Is 10:12-19. ***A sign to you:*** Upon the fulfillment of that which Isaiah here prophesied, Judah would determine that the events that would soon transpire were a sign that God was still with her. ***Things that grow of themselves:*** Because of the length of time they were shut up in Jerusalem, they had not been able to plant in their fields. And thus, volunteer crops were growing even as these words were spoken. They would eat of these volunteer crops, for the Assyrian armies would be gone in the year of these events. This harvesting of volunteer crops would continue into the second year because of the calamity that was transpiring. In the third year they would be able to return to normal farming. ***Out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant:*** The survivors of the city of Jerusalem would be the remnant of Israel that would repopulate the land. ***For My own sake ... and David's sake:*** God had made a promise to David (2 Sm 7:10-16). From his seed One would sit on his throne. The One to whom God referred in the context of 2 Samuel 7 had

not yet come into human history, and would not for another six hundred years. Thus for the sake of bringing the Christ into the world, the inhabitants of Jerusalem at this time in history would be spared in order to repopulate Israel. For the sake of God's eternal plan through Jesus Christ, the remnant of Israel that was sealed up behind the walls of Jerusalem were not to be obliterated from history. God's plan through Israel had not yet been completed in human history.

19:35-37 ***Angel of the Lord:*** See Gn 16:7; Ex 3:2; Zc 1:12. ***Killed 185,000:*** It was time for action. Various explanations have been given for the cause of this death, for in archaeological records there is mention of a demise of the Assyrian army while they were in Palestine. But most of these explanations center around natural occurrences as diseases. The problem with these explanations is that the biblical text states that the deaths occurred in one night, and that in the morning people arose and saw the dead bodies. The deaths did not occur over a period of time, but in one night. ***Now it came to pass:*** The biblical text does not state that Sennacherib would be immediately assassinated upon his return to Nineveh. In fact, according to Assyrian records, his death did not occur until about twenty years after he returned from Palestine. ***His sons killed him:*** From the archaeological records of ancient Assyria, the death of Sennacherib can be reconstructed in reference to the reign of Esarhaddon. The oldest son of Sennacherib had been taken captive to Elim. Arda-Mulishi, who was possibly the next oldest son, probably expected to be the new king of Assyria. (Historians believe that Arda-Mulishi in Assyrian annals was the same as Adrammelech in the biblical text.) However, Sennacherib chose Esarhaddon instead of the older brothers of the family. So while Esarhaddon was traveling away from Nineveh, Arda-Mulishi murdered Sennacherib in order to assume the throne. But when Esarhaddon returned, much of the army of Assyria sided with him, and thus Arda-Mulishi fled.

Chapter 20

20:1-7 ***Hezekiah was sick:*** Chronologically, the sickness of Hezekiah would have taken place before the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. The events described in 18:13 – 19:37 would have taken place during the extra fifteen years of life that were given to Hezekiah. We would conclude, therefore, that in answer to his prayer, God wanted Hezekiah to be the leader of Israel who would take Judah through the testing years of the Assyrian invasion. ***I have heard your prayer:*** God had advised Hezekiah to get his house in order. Realizing that death was imminent, Hezekiah *"turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord"* (vs 2). God's answer was, *"**I have heard your prayer**. I have seen your tears: surely **I will heal you**"* (vs 5). God changed the hour in which He knew Hezekiah was going to die. The event of Hezekiah's death was changed by a divine response to a man's prayer. We must conclude, therefore, that God can answer prayer in order to change history. In answering prayer we must consider that God can know all options of life. He can know all that could happen as a result of any particular thing we might do. Simply because He can know all the options does not mean that the options are predestined. It simply says that He is omniscient. Hezekiah had two options that God knew in reference to his health. If Hezekiah continued on his present course of life, the option of death stood before him. God simply came to him and told him what was going to happen. In this case, however, Hezekiah believed that God could switch his life over to the other option. That option was life. However, we assume that the extending of Hezekiah's life was to further God's purpose with Israel. We must always understand the principle of life and death that Paul stated to the Philippians. He wrote that he had a *"desire to depart and be with Christ, **which is far better**"* (Ph 1:23). Hezekiah's situation may have been similar to Paul's in reference to the church. *"Nevertheless to remain in the flesh **is more needful for you**"* (Ph 1:24). God gave Hezekiah fifteen more years for Israel's sake, and not specifically for the sake of Hezekiah. We must conclude this because for some reason God came to give him the option of fifteen more years of life. God knew that Hezekiah would turn in tears, and thus He could be granted another option and more time to guide Israel on the right path. There is something greater in the context here than simply giving Hezekiah fifteen more years of life.

20:8-11 ***Let the shadow turn backward:*** It was certainly a miracle for the shadow of the sundial to go backward ten steps. The miracle was the reversal of the shadow, with no emphasis being placed on a reversal of the earth's rotation. God could have reversed the rotation of the earth if He so desired, but it is more probable that He bent the rays of the light.

20:12,13 ***Berodach-baladan:*** Or, Merodach-baladan (Is 39:1). This was a spy mission from Babylon. While Hezekiah was concerned about the threat of the Assyrians, he catered to the Babylonians, thinking possibly that they might aid him in any confrontation with the Assyrians. The emissaries, however, came from Babylon with more interest in the wealth of Jerusalem than the health of Hezekiah.

20:14-19 ***What have they seen in your house:*** What the Babylonian emissaries had seen was all that Hezekiah had. The ground work had been laid, therefore, for the Babylonians to come again in 586 B.C. in order to take away the treasures of the temple and royal palace. ***Your sons ... will be taken away:*** See 24:10-17. ***Peace and truth in my days:*** Hezekiah correctly understood that the calamity about which Isaiah spoke would not take place in his life time.

20:20,21 ***Brought water into the city:*** See Encyclopedic Study Guide, Archaeology and the Bible, E, "Hezekiah's Tunnel." This waterway was constructed in order to bring water into the city of Jerusalem, specifically during times of siege. It was surely in existence shortly after 701 B.C. when Sennacherib invaded Palestine and threatened to take Jerusalem. Water was channeled through solid rock from the Pool of Gihon on the outside of the city wall. The tunnel was about 533 meters long (1750 feet) and bears the name of Hezekiah.

Chapter 21
REIGNS OF MANASSEH & AMON

21:1-9 (2 Ch 33:1-20) ***Manasseh:*** Manasseh officially reigned in Judah from 687 to 642 B.C. He was the longest

reigning king of Judah after the division of Israel during the reign of Rehoboam. He initially did evil in the sight of the Lord in that he followed after idolatry, witchcraft, and the sacrifice of children in the early part of his reign. During his reign, Judah was subjected to Assyria, who eventually placed him in prison in Babylon. Upon his repentance, he returned to Jerusalem to initiate many reforms to faith in God (2 Ch 33:11-17). Archaeologists have found his name in history, specifically on a seal that he probably used during his coregent rule with Hezekiah, his father. Since he reigned during the kingship of both Esarhadon and Ashurbanipal of Assyria, Manasseh's name appears in the historical annals of these kings. ***He built altars in the house of the Lord:*** The writer of both Kings and Chronicles wanted the initial readers to understand that Manasseh, and leaders like him, led Israel to the judgment of captivity that they were experiencing at the time they read these words. Since the "book of the law" was found during the repairs of the temple that took place during the reign of Josiah, the grandson of Manasseh, we would conclude that the people had no written copy of the law when Manasseh reigned. Nevertheless, they had both the religious heritage of Israel, as well as the prophets of God who spoke during these years of apostasy. The nations of the north and south were destroyed because of their lack of knowledge of the word of God (Hs 4:6). But they refused to have the knowledge of God in their lives. Their judgment by God was just because God made available the sources (the prophets) from which they could understand that they were sinning against God.

21:10-18 ***The measuring line ... and the plummet:*** When measured with the standard of God's word, Jerusalem, as Samaria and the house of Ahab, was crooked. The result of their apostasy that was led by Manasseh would be captivity. Manasseh's own time in prison did not encourage him to totally repent of all that he had led Judah to do in following after divination and witchcraft (2 Ch 33:11-13). The legacy of his reign, therefore, was not one of repentance, but of idolatry. He sought to correct the sin of his early reign, but he had led the people too far away from God. They were set on a course for destruction. ***The remnant:*** That is, the southern kingdom of Judah. ***Shed much innocent blood:*** This would not only include the sacrifice of his son (vs 6), but surely referred to the death of some of the prophets that God sent to Judah at this time in history (vs 10; compare Hb 11:32-40). ***Garden of Uzza:*** Since it is recorded that only Manasseh and Amon were buried at this site, we could assume that they were buried in a disgraceful location, not a site where the honored royalty were buried.

21:19-26 (2 Ch 33:21-25) ***Amon:*** The reign of Amon from 642 to 640 B.C. was a continuation of the apostasy of his father, Manasseh. There was a conspiracy in the inner court of Amon that led to his assassination. Those who murdered him placed Josiah on the throne. Since Josiah was only eight years old when he was placed on the throne, we would assume that some in the inner court, or priests of the temple, were frustrated with the apostasy that was led by Manasseh and Amon. They were looking for a change, and thus placed on the throne one whom they had trained for the position.

Chapter 22
REFORMATION OF JOSIAH

22:1-7 ***Josiah:*** Josiah reigned from 640 to 609 B.C. ***Repair the damages of the house:*** In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign he initiated repair of the temple similar to the objective of Jehoash who had sought to do the same (12:9-15). What is historically significant about the characters who are mentioned in the events of this chapter is their mention in discovered annals and royal seals that date to the time of Josiah. The name of Hilkiah appears on the seal of Azariah who was a priest and the grandfather of Ezra (1 Ch 6:13 – 14; 9:11; Er 7:1). Hilkiah's name appears also on a seal of another son named Hanan. Ahikam's son, Gadaliah, was appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (25:22). Shaphan (22:3) and Nathan-melech's (23:11) names also appear on ancient records of those who lived during these times.

22:8-10 ***I have found the book of the law:*** We are not told how long Israel was without a copy of the Torah (Gn – Dt). We assume that what was discovered was the first five books of the Old Testament, though only those portions that referred to the responsibilities of the king were immediately read before Josiah.

22:11-13 ***He tore his clothes:*** It is possible that Josiah had been taught concerning the existence of a written law that God had given to Israel in the past. Neither he nor the priests at the time had seen a copy. When this most significant discovery was made, and the actual law was read in the presence of the king, Josiah's heart was moved to great repentance. This repentance initiated the greatest restoration movement in the nation of Israel. From the time when Solomon led Israel astray after the gods of his wives, no greater restoration to God had been initiated. Josiah did not simply seek to reform the existing religious ceremonies and practices of Israel. He set out to destroy all that related to idolatrous worship. The difference between a reformation and a restoration is that in a restoration adherents seek to go back to the original teaching concerning religious beliefs and practices. In a reformation existing beliefs are modified and the existing ceremonies are adjusted to conform to the change in beliefs. Josiah led a restoration, not a reformation. He made every effort to destroy the existing ceremonies that were based on erroneous beliefs.

22:14-20 ***Huldah:*** The prophets Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk were into their ministry during this period. All were warning of the impending exile that was coming. It seems that Huldah was immediately accessible, and thus Josiah went straight for her counsel. ***Thus says the Lord:*** Huldah's message was clear. First, God would bring calamity upon the southern kingdom of Israel because of her apostasy to idolatry (vss 15-17). Second, the calamity would not come to pass in the days of Josiah (vss 18-20). Josiah thus received the proclamation of calamity come from two sources, the book of the law and the prophetess, Huldah. There was no contradiction in what was to come about in the history of Judah, the last remaining remnant of God's people in the promised land. The extent to which Josiah went in the restoration of the faith of Judah was revealed by the intensity of his destruction of all that surrounded idolatrous religion. ***Your eyes will not see:***

God's judgment had already been established. The restoration of Josiah only prolonged it until the reign of another king. The historical point is that restoration movements always circle around and become that from which the fathers of the movement fled. Though Josiah religiously cleaned up Judah by the word of God, his descendants returned to that from which he and his generation had fled. Apostasy is only one generation away.

Chapter 23

23:1,2 ***He read ... the book of the covenant:*** The law was to be read to the people throughout their history (Dt 31:9-13). Since they did not have a copy of the law of the covenant, the people were ignorant of the law (See Hs 4:6). Or, the case may have been that they refused to take advantage of seeking out the word of God. In this case, Josiah assumed spiritual leadership of the people (Compare Ja 24:15). He personally stood before the people and read from the word of God.

23:3-14 ***The king ... made a covenant:*** In order for religious paradigm shifts to be made in a society, the leadership of the society must make a covenant with God. Social paradigm shifts include great social chaos, and thus resistance comes from those who are comfortable with the present state of sin. Leaders must make a resolve to stand against such resistance in order to do that which must be done to bring the people back to God. If the leadership does not make this resolve, the resistance of the masses will discourage them, and thus thwart the restoration. ***All the people committed to the covenant:*** Not only must leadership commit to the restoration, the people also must commit themselves to follow in order to restore their lives to God. In the restoration events that followed, which probably took over one year to accomplish, Josiah led and the people followed. His attack was not based on reforming temple worship, but in eradicating the land of all references and places of idol worship, as well as those who led in such worship. The fact that his restoration extended over a period of time gave the priests of Baal time to repent. Those who did not repent were eliminated from the society of Judah. ***Baal ... Asherah:*** Under the leadership of Ahab and Jezebel, this worship had infected Israel for many years (11:17-20; 18:4,5; 1 Kg 14:23,24; 16:32; 18). At the time the restoration began, the temple in Jerusalem was essentially a temple for Baal worship. ***Sodomites:*** Prostitutes were introduced into the worship that was associated with Baal. ***Priests of the high places did not come:*** There was opposition to the restoration of Josiah by those priests whose salaries depended on the offerings that people brought to the high places. ***Molech:*** Ahab was probably the first to introduce human sacrifice to Molech (16:3; see 21:3). Josiah destroyed all that pertained to this abomination in the land. ***Mount of corruption:*** Some have stated that this was a reference to the Mt. of Olives east of Jerusalem. ***Solomon had built:*** These structures had been in existence since the days of Solomon, about 400 years.

23:15-20 ***Bethel:*** The restoration went beyond the borders of Judah. Since the northern kingdom had been taken into Assyrian captivity, Judah assumed some leadership over this territory. The altar that was built by Jeroboam to keep the northern tribes away from the temple had become an altar to false gods and a symbol of the division of the tribes of Israel. The destruction of this altar was the fulfillment of prophecy (See 1 Kg 13:1-3). Since Bethel was in the territory of the Assyrian Empire after the fall of Samaria, some have suggested that Josiah's restoration in the north took place after the fall of the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C., the year that Nineveh was defeated by the Babylonians and Medes. But we could also assume that many Assyrians had withdrawn from the northern kingdom by the time of Josiah in order to face the threat that the Babylonians and Medes where presenting to Nineveh. ***The tomb of the man of God:*** The restoration actions of Josiah had been prophesied years before by a prophet whose name we do not know. His prophecy was recorded only in 1 Kings 13:1,2 (See 1 Kg 13:30,31). The people knew this prophecy only by word of mouth until it was written by the writer of the Kings. What the prophet had said had been preserved in the oral teachings of the priests until the fulfillment of the prophecy in the restoration of Josiah. We conclude, therefore, that many of the priests remained faithful to the word of God regardless of the false prophets and unrighteous kings.

23:21-23 (2 Ch 35:1-19) ***Keep the Passover:*** The writer states that this Passover was unusual in that the Passover had not been kept in such a manner since the time of the judges. We are not told with what regularity the Passover had been kept. We could assume that it became only one of many feasts that were combined with idolatrous worship. The Passover was Israel's day of independence, and yet, in their idolatrous worship they lost its significance, possibly attributing their existence as a nation in some ways to the work of their idolatrous gods.

23:24,25 In order to accomplish this social paradigm shift, those who led in the apostasy had to be put away. This was not a confrontation in leadership between two religions. It was a competition between truth and error. Those who led in error had to be eliminated in order for the truth to be restored. The execution of the false prophets revealed that Josiah was serious about the restoration, as Elijah was in his opposition to the false prophets of Ahab and Jezebel. The execution of the false prophets indicated that the work of the false prophets was actually treasonous work against the people of God. They led the nation of Israel into the beliefs and behavior of foreign gods.

23:26,27 ***I will remove Judah:*** The extent of the moral and social decay that was promoted by Manasseh could not be corrected by the extremity of the restoration of Josiah. Josiah's restoration was a historical sermon, but the sermon could not correct the sin of the generations before him. The only way that Judah could be purged was that God had to take the people into captivity. This would happen when Josiah's restoration would eventually circle around and again become that from which he led the people.

23:28-30 There was a clash of kingdoms during the end of the reign of Josiah, in which he involved himself, and subsequently was killed. The nations involved were the Assyrians, the rising Babylonians and Medes, and the Egyptians. Josiah initiated his restoration in Israel as the Assyrian Empire began

to fall. The Assyrian city of Asshur fell to the Medes, and then Nineveh to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Haran fell to a force of both the Babylonians and Medes in 610 B.C. Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, sought to come to the rescue of the Assyrians at Carchemish. While on his way there Josiah engaged him in battle at Megiddo. However, Josiah was mortally wounded, and subsequently died. The Assyrians were defeated by the Babylonians and Medes at the battle of Carchemish in 609 B.C. From the time of this battle, there was a change in world empires from the Assyrians to the Babylonians (See comments Dn 2).

NATIONAL TURMOIL & CAPTIVITY

23:31-37 (2 Ch 36:1-4) ***Jehoahaz:*** He reigned in 609 B.C.. ***Jeremiah:*** This was not Jeremiah, the prophet. Jehoahaz reigned only three months before Pharaoh Neco put him in bonds. ***Eliakim:*** Pharaoh Neco changed his name to Jehoiakim. Throughout their history, Judah digressed from God-anointed kings, to people-appointed kings, and now to foreign-appointed kings. Judah was now again under the control of Egypt. As long as Judah was subjugated to Egypt, she had to pay tribute. ***Jehoiakim:*** Jehoiakim's reign lasted from 608 to 597 B.C. Judah was a vassal of Egypt during the early part of his reign, but later Babylon took control of Judah (vs 34, 24:1). It was at this time that there was again great turmoil in the international scene. Nebuchadnezzar II was one of the longest reigning kings of the Babylonian Empire. He had succeeded his father, Nabopolassar, who had engaged in war at Carchemish a coalition of forces between Egypt and Assyria. It was there that the Egyptian and Assyrian armies were defeated. However, Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar, his son, came to the throne of Babylon. After the battle at Carchemish, the Babylonians terminated their march into Palestinian territory, for when Nabopolassar died in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon in order to secure the throne. However, Nebuchadnezzar later returned to Palestine. It was probably at this time that Jehoiakim was subjected to Babylonian control, and thus assessed to pay tribute to Babylon. However, in 601 B.C., in a battle between the armies of Egypt and Babylon, Pharaoh Neco inflicted great casualties on the army of Babylon. It was at this time that Jehoiakim took the opportunity to rebel against the weakened Babylonian forces. Jehoiachin later assassinated Jehoiakim, and began his reign. But in the same year Nebuchadnezzar squashed the Judean rebellion and Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, was taken into Babylonian captivity. Zedekiah was then appointed king of Judah.

Chapter 24

24:1-20 (2 Ch 36:9,10) God was determined to remove the remainder of the Israelites from the land because of the sins of Manasseh. ***Jehoiachin:*** Jehoiachin, who reigned in 597 B.C., was the victim of God's judgment that was now to be brought down upon Judah. As a young king, he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. The discovery of the Babylon Chronicle gives details of Nebuchadnezzar's march against "Hatti-land" (Syria & Palestine). The Chronicle states that he took Jerusalem and carried the king (Jehoiachin) and captives away to Babylon. The Babylonian Chronicle also states that Nebuchadnezzar appointed a new king of Judah, which king is probably a reference to Zedekiah. ***Innocent blood:*** As with Ahab and Jezebel, who used their government positions to kill Naboth in order to confiscate his vineyard, so did Manasseh. Civil government is established in order to protect the people. But when government attacks its own people, the society is ruined. In this case, Manasseh's state sin would not go unpunished. ***Craftsmen and smiths ... poor:*** Nebuchadnezzar took the skilled people from the society. He left those who were unskilled, and thus those who would not necessarily organize another rebellion. The skilled artisans would help build the Babylonian Empire, whereas the unskilled who were left in Palestine would not develop the Israelites into a formidable nation that would be able to rebel against Babylon. Certainly, some of the poor were such because they were unproductive. But it could have been that they were thrown into poverty because wicked kings as Manasseh had stolen their land as Ahab and Jezebel had stolen the vineyard of Naboth. When Nebuchadnezzar left the poor in the land, they could have been able to reclaim their inheritances, and start again to build their families around their inherited land. The captivity, therefore, extracted those who benefited from the sins of Manasseh, while it was a blessing to the poor who had been robbed of their inheritances during his reign. ***He carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon:*** This was the initial conquest of Jerusalem which occurred in 597 B.C. There was little destruction to the city during this conquest because Jehoiachin surrendered. A second conquest of the city occurred in 586 B.C. in order to put down the rebellion of Zedekiah. It was during this conquest that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple (25:1-7). Another third and final raid of the land took place in 582 B.C. (Jr 52:29,30).

Chapter 25
FALL OF JERUSALEM

25:1-7 Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem for a year and a half. ***Killed his sons:*** Nebuchadnezzar had shown mercy to Jehoiachin. However, Zedekiah had betrayed him, causing him to bring his army from Babylon to subdue the insurrection. He was thus given harsher treatment.

25:8-17 (Jr 52:12-23) ***Nebuzaradan:*** This was the general of the army of Nebuchadnezzar. ***Burned:*** Nebuzaradan conducted a complete destruction of Jerusalem. It was the goal of Nebuchadnezzar to terminate the existence of the center of Jewish pride. Thus all the major buildings of the city were burned, specifically the temple. At this time in the history of Israel the temple represented the religious pride of the people. In order to humble and humiliate the Jews, Nebuchadnezzar wanted the temple destroyed. All the bronze and gold articles of both the royal palace and temple were cut in pieces in order to be transported to Babylon. The destruction was total, and thus the fulfillment of prophecy (1 Kg 9:8). All that Solomon had built for the pride of Israel and centralization of the Israelites' faith was either destroyed or taken to Babylon. God's purpose for the destruction was to remove the center of reference for government and religion of the Jewish people.

Nebuchadnezzar's purpose was to complete the conquest of a nation. And in order to do this, he had to destroy the nation's capital. If Israel had followed God's original instructions for the social structure of Israel there would have been no king to carry into captivity, no temple to destroy, and no capital to tear down. They would have remained an agricultural nation that God would have protected from invading raiding parties of the nations around them.

25:18-21 (Jr 52:24-30) During the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar gave special instructions concerning the treatment of Jeremiah, probably because Jeremiah had prophesied that Babylon would conquer the city (See Jr 39:11-18). ***The king of Babylon struck them:*** He killed those who had encouraged rebellion against Babylon. Among these were the chief priest and the local officials. There were also in this group possibly provincial leaders who would not accept the prophecy of Jeremiah that Jerusalem would fall. Before the coming of the Babylonians to Judah, they had persecuted Jeremiah for making statements of conquest. Their rejection of the message of Jeremiah revealed that they were loyal to Zedekiah and his rebellion. They thus fought against the will of God that the city be destroyed. These and others were taken into exile to Babylon (Jr 52:29). If they would have listened to Jeremiah they could have fled the city and gone back to the farms. But at this time in the history of Israel, the people were not interested in listening to the man of God. Their fate was sealed by their own rebellion against God. What happens in the religious behavior of nations that are doomed for destruction is that they give up on God, and thus God gives them over to the demise of their own making.

25:22-26 (Jr 40:1-12) Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Lachish, Debir and Bethshemesh had already been destroyed in previous campaigns. Possibly other minor cities had also been destroyed. However, the rural areas were spared, and the people left to continue farming the land. Gedaliah was appointed as governor, thus making Palestine a province of the Babylonian Empire. Gedaliah was favored by Nebuchadnezzar, possibly because his father had taken measures to spare Jeremiah when his life was threatened by those who were rebellious in Judah before the coming of the Babylonians (See Jr 38:24). ***Ishmael:*** Gedaliah sought to serve the king of Babylon, but a group of defiant insurrectionists were suspicious of his leadership. He, and others who were aligned with him, were subsequently murdered. The murderers then fled to Egypt, believing that Nebuchadnezzar would again come and take vengeance of those who killed his governor (Jr 43:5-7). It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar did come again in 582 B.C., taking again more captives to Babylon (See Jr 52:30). Ishmael was of the Davidic line of kings (Jr 41:1). He possibly assassinated Gedaliah in order to establish the Davidic line of kings. A bulla (a clay seal impression) has been discovered on which it is stated, "Belonging to Ishmael the king's son." The style of the script of this bulla is from the late 7th or early 6th century B.C. It is possible that this bulla was written by Ishmael. Another bulla has been discovered that states, "Belonging to Elishama the king's son." This person may have been Ishmael's grandfather (See 25:25).

25:27-30 (Jr 52:31-34) ***Jehoiachin:*** After about thirty-seven years in prison, Evil-merodach (Amel-Marduk) released Jehoiachin from prison. He was given consideration for being the king of Judah, and thus honored in Babylon as such. For this reason, Ezekiel focused his prophecies on the reign of Jehoiachin and not Zedekiah. Zedekiah was not considered a king of Judah simply because he was set up as king by a foreign power. ***A daily ration for every day:*** One of the exciting discoveries made by archaeologists was the discovery Babylonian ration receipts by the Ishtar Gate in Babylon. These receipts mention Jehoiachin (See *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide,* Archaeology and the Bible, F, Jehoiachin's food rations).

With the destruction of Jerusalem a chapter was concluded in the history of Israel, and a new one opened. God had allowed the Israelites to follow a personality as their leader on earth from the days of Saul, their first king. With the Babylonian captivity came the termination of earthly kings among the Jews. It was the beginning of their trust in God through what was written in the law and the prophets. Malachi concluded the writings of the prophets, and the Kings and Chronicles were records of their digression into apostasy. From the time of the first captives returned in 536 B.C., Israel had to depend on their lessons from history that were written in the Kings and Chronicles, and moral direction from the Sinai law and the prophets. God intended that His people as a nation be preserved until the coming of the Messiah. Their preservation would depend on following the written word. Since the church would be directed by the written word of God throughout the centuries, God prepared the Jews to be word directed. They would be so directed until the coming of the Messiah. From the first century on, God's people would continue to be word directed. For almost two thousand years God's people have existed because faithful followers have trusted the message of the New Testament, which explains the gospel. God proved that Israel could continue by trusting in His written word. The existence of the Christians today proves the same.

Since the purpose of the existence of Israel was to preserve a nation of people from going in the way of the generation of people before Noah (See Gn 6:5), Israel's preservation led to the revelation of the incarnation of the Son of God. When the purpose of Israel was fulfilled, the nation was no longer needed as a special people, and thus, in Christ all believers have become one (Gl 3:26-29). After the Pentecost of A.D. 30, all of God's people are one in Christ, wherein there is *"neither bondservant nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise"* (Gl 3:28). In these words, the entire purpose for the establishment of the nation of Israel is revealed. Israel, as a nation, was God's social vehicle to eventually send His Son into the world. When the Son came, it was then that the Son prophesied the end of national Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). When studying through the history of Israel in the Old Testament, therefore, it very important to keep in mind God's plan for national Israel.

1 Chronicles

WRITER

According to Jewish tradition it was believed that Ezra wrote both 1 & 2 Chronicles, as well as the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This is believed because the book of Ezra immediately begins where 2 Chronicles concludes (2 Ch 36:22,23; Er 1:1-3). However, some have believed that someone else wrote the Chronicles because of the difference between the wording of the Chronicles and the book of Ezra. This argument must always be questioned, however, because of the manner by which the Holy Spirit allowed the authors of the Bible books to use their own writing styles in the composition of the books and letters. If a writer wrote at different times in his life, we would expect that his style of writing would change throughout the years. We would thus expect a different style of writing between two books by the same author when a great amount of time had transpired between the writing of the books. The difference in writing style only illustrates that the Holy Spirit allowed such.

DATE

The subject matter of the Chronicles is about the events in the history of Israel down to the end of their captivity in Babylon and the restoration that was initiated by the Medo-Persian king, Cyrus (See 2 Ch 36:22,23). In view of the comments made in 2 Chronicles 35:25, it appears that the Chronicles would have been written after the time of Jeremiah who wrote Lamentations. Most Bible students place the writing of the Chronicles sometime in the latter part of the 5th century B.C. The books are place at this late date to remind Israel of her former kings.

BOOK

In our Bibles today we have 1 & 2 Chronicles as two books. The division of the one original book into two was made with the publication of the Septuagint. The name "Chronicles" comes from Jerome who translated the Hebrew title *divre hayyamin* in 1 Chronicles 27:24 ("the account of the chronicles of King David") with the Latin word *Chronicorum*.

It was believed by the Jews that Ezra wrote the Chronicles, and then the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, in order to provide a historical transition from the exile of Israel to the return of the remnant to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. The audience of the Chronicles was the returned remnant who resided in Palestine. They needed reassurance that God had not terminated His purpose to use Israel in order to bring the Messiah into the world through David's lineage. The returned exiles also needed to be reassured that God's covenant with Israel was still valid, and thus He was continuing His plan to restore the throne of David for the Messiah who was yet to come.

1 Chronicles, therefore, focuses on the dynasty of David in view of the fact that God continued to establish the throne of David upon which He would set a King who would reign forever (17:1-27). This theme is emphasized in 1 Chronicles by the writer's focus on the genealogy of David and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (1:1 – 9:44). Emphasis is also placed on David's desire to build the temple as the permanent resting place of the ark of the covenant (See 15:1 – 16:3). The writer focuses on David's decision to build the temple in Jerusalem (21:18 – 22:1), to stockpile materials for the construction of the temple (22:2-5), and to organize the priests and Levites for temple ministry (23:2 – 26:32). After he had made preparations for the construction of the temple before his death, David charged his son, Solomon, concerning the construction (22:6-16; 28:9,10). Since the temple was the dream of David, he wanted to secure its construction in the minds of the leaders of Israel that it be built after his death.

1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings cover the history of Israel with the purpose of focusing on the reason for the end of the northern kingdom of Israel because of her sins. The history of both the northern and southern kingdoms are thus recorded for the posterity of Israel in order to emphasize why God allowed the Jews to be taken into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. The Chronicles were written from the perspective of the Levites in order that the ceremonial worship of Israel be restored with the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. Because of the prominence of the tribe of Judah, which included Benjamin, 1 Chronicles focuses on the faithfulness of the Jews who came from these two tribes. Therefore, the writer is primarily concerned with the history of the southern kingdom of Israel.

It is important that the Bible student understand that the Chronicles contains omissions and gaps in the genealogies. Many names are spelled differently than they are in other books. The reason for this is that languages and pronunciation of words continually change. This change is reflected in the different ways Hebrew names were spelled and pronounced at the time each Bible book was written. The Bible student, therefore, must not be frustrated with the different spelling of the same name as it is recorded in the Kings and Chronicles.

Nothing is said of the northern kingdom in 2 Chronicles simply because Jeroboam had led the northern tribes after sins that detoured them from worshiping the one true and living God. Jeroboam's altars in Bethel and Dan kept the minds of the northern tribes away from focusing on God. For this reason, 1 Chronicles focuses on the kings and events that relate to the southern kingdom, specifically the tribe of Judah. 2 Chronicles covers the history of both 1 & 2 Kings.

In the composition of the Chronicles the writer relies on the information that is presented by nine prophets: Samuel (1 Ch 29:29), Nathan (1 Ch 29:29), Gad (1 Ch 29:29), Ahijah (2 Ch 9:29), Shemaiah (2 Ch 12:15), Iddo (2 Ch 12:15), Jehu (2 Ch 20:34), Hozai (2 Ch 33:19) and Isaiah (2 Ch 26:22; 32:32). Reference is also made to the Jewish historical books as the chronicle of the kings of Judah and Israel, which books are no longer in existence. These books were not a part of the canon of Jewish Scripture (See 1 Ch 9:1; 2 Ch 27:7; 33:18; 36:8). They were not inspired books.

Genealogies From Adam To David
(1:1 – 9:44)

Outline: (1) From Adam to Jacob (1:1-54), (2) Descendants of Jacob (2:1 – 8:40), (3) Remnant from captivity (9:1-44)

Chapter 1
FROM ADAM TO JACOB

The reading of the record of the genealogies may be tedious to us who are removed from the historical setting of the time when the Chronicles were written. However, at the time of writing the returning remnant of Israel needed to be reminded of the responsibilities of the Levites in reference to their God-ordained ministry. Those of the tribe of Judah needed to recall God's special blessing on this tribe as the tribe through which God would bring the Messiah into the world. It was important, therefore, that all Israel be established in the promised land until the coming of the Messiah. We must also keep in mind that Israel had a little over three centuries to go after the time of writing before the coming of the Messiah. God knew this, and thus He wanted, through the inspiration of the Chronicles, to reinstate the nation of Israel in the land and reestablish the order of the Levites for the remainder of their history in the promised land.

We must keep in mind that the genealogies are not complete. Different people are omitted from the genealogies, especially those who played little or no part in the spiritual preservation of Israel. Some are omitted because they were an evil influence in the history of Israel. It was not important, therefore, for the Israelites to know every personality of a genealogy. Since the listing of the genealogies was inspired, it was sufficient to list only the primary personalities in order to establish the line of descendants.

1:1-4 See Gn 5:1-32. In this history of people groups that began with different individuals, there is no mention of the flood of Noah's day. What was important to the writer were the names of people who played a significant spiritual role in the development of mankind, as well as those leaders who led in the development of the populations of the world.

1:5-7 ***Japheth:*** He was the lastborn. But here, as the descendant of Noah, he is placed first in order to emphasize the heritage of Shem over the other two sons of Noah (See Gn 10:2-4).

1:8-16 ***Ham:*** See Gn 10:6-20.

1:17-27 ***Sons of Shem:*** The Genesis account of Shem having nine sons is here explained to be five sons and four grandsons (See Gn 10:21-32; 11:10-26). ***Peleg:*** This name means "division," thus signifying that from Peleg people were divided into different ethnic people groups.

1:28-34 ***Abraham:*** The list from Peleg to Abraham includes ten names of successive prominent people that eventually led to the birth of Abram, the father of our faith. Except for Keturah, Abraham's wife who was taken after Sarah's death, the mothers of the descendants from Abraham are not mentioned (See Gn 25:1-4). ***Isaac:*** Isaac was in the covenant lineage. Ishmael is listed with his descendants in order to identify the beginning of the nations that surrounded the Israelites in the land of Palestine (See Gn 25:13-15). ***Israel:*** The name "Israel" is used by the writer instead of Jacob. The reason for this is that the writer seeks to remain true to his purpose for recording God's work through His people, not a specific person.

1:35-37 ***Esau:*** See Gn 36:1-43. **Amalek:** This would be the father of the Amalekites who were antagonistic to the Israelites when they first came from Egyptian captivity. On the command of God, they were later to be destroyed by the Israelites because of their aggression against Israel.

1:38-42 ***Seir:*** Seir was not a descendant of Abraham. He was a Horite whose descendants possibly called themselves after him, or he gave his name to the mountainous area that reaches from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah. It was from these people that Esau took a concubine. The people of Seir were eventually driven from their area by the Edomites (Dt 2:12).

1:43-54 ***Chief:*** Translators have had a difficult time translating the Hebrew word of this context. Words as "duke" or "ruler" have been used. The generic word "leader" would also suffice as a word to be used to describe these individuals. ***Edom:*** After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Edomites vanished from history. Herod the Great was an Edomite. Because the Edomites were the continual enemies of Israel, Obadiah prophesied the end of this people, which prophecy came to pass.

Chapter 2
DESCENDANTS OF JACOB

2:1,2 It was the focus of the writer to emphasize the genealogy of Jacob's sons in order to reaffirm to the returning captives the foundation upon which Israel as a nation was built.

The restoration of temple worship after the captivity was in the mind of the writer, and thus the restoration of all twelve tribes to the promised land is foremost in the purpose of 1 Chronicles. Bible students must never forget that in order to fulfill His promise to all Israel, God brought a remnant of all twelve tribes back from Assyrian and Babylonian captivity in order to receive the Messiah when He was born into the world. ***Sons of Israel:*** The order of the listing of sons here is different than other accounts (See Gn 49:3-27; Ex 1:2-4).

2:3-17 There is some repetition in the lists that begins with the listing of names in this chapter. For example, the listing of 2:3-17,21-41 and 4:1-23 are assumed to be parallel genealogies of the tribe of Judah. However, there are some differences in the names of the two lists. This is often frustrating to the Bible student. We must assume, however, that the original recipients of the Chronicles were familiar with Jewish genealogies, and thus understood the intentions of the writer and the genealogies. ***Judah:*** Though the fourth son of Jacob, Judah is listed first in order to give prominence to Judah's part in the lineage of the Messiah, for from Judah would come the Messiah (See Gn 38:6-30; Gn 46:12; Nm 26:19-22). ***Chelubai:*** This is Caleb (See vss 18,42,50; 4:15). ***David the seventh:*** This is different from 1 Samuel 17:12-14, where David is listed as the eighth. Elihu, or Eliah, is mentioned in 27:18. This could be the missing seventh son, or it is possible that in the Samuel account a son died in early age and thus did not credit mention by the writer of 1 Samuel. ***Abigail:*** This name is used in reference to a half sister of David in 2 Samuel 17:25, but here reference is to one of David's fifteen wives.

2:18-20 ***Caleb:*** This could have been the Caleb who was associated with Joshua, or it could refer to one who was not an Israelite, but an Edomite who was assimilated into Israel. Some have assumed that in verses 9,18,42,50 reference is to the Caleb who was a descendant through Judah, but in 4:11,15 reference was to a Caleb of Edomite origin.

2:21-24 The listing of 21-24 and 25-41 are probably an interlude within the listing of Caleb that is found in 18-20 and 42-49. ***Jair:*** This is probably the Jair of Judges 10:3. ***Geshur:*** This is possibly an area near the area of Syria (See 2 Sm 3:3; 13:37; 15:8).

2:25-41 ***Jerahmeel:*** See 1 Sm 27:10; 30:29. ***Jarha:*** Though the descendants through Jarha are nowhere mentioned in the Bible, the mention of this Egyptian servant in the bloodline of Israel proves a point. The population of Israel was not pure in the sense of being descendants exclusively from the twelve sons of Jacob.

2:42-55 This account continues the descendants of Caleb (vs 42). Verses 46-49 list the descendants from Caleb's concubines. Verses 50-55 are possibly the sons of Caleb who were the descendants of Caleb through his son Hur. Throughout the preceding listings we assume that the first readers knew those who were left out of the genealogies. It was not the purpose of the writer to maintain a strict list of all who were in a particular genealogy. His concern was to bring the reader to the genealogy of David in the following chapter 3. ***Families of the scribes:*** We know little of the scribal work of the Israelites. However, in view of the heritage of the scribes of that day we could assume that they carried on the tradition of scribal work that was commonly practiced by the scribes of Mesopotamia. From archaeological discoveries we have learned that a scribe was one who was given high prestige in society. Selected young men went through scribal schools that taught them cuneiform signs in writing, and also to speak Sumerian, which was the language of the scholars. Students were taught from bilingual texts that were written in Akkadian, the first language of the students, and the Sumerian language. Though we do not have any information concerning how the Jewish scribes were educated, Israel's close association with the Kenites would lead us to believe that they were also trained in the same disciplines as the Mesopotamian scribes.

Chapter 3

3:1-9 This is the primary genealogy on which the writer focuses in the book. This genealogy centers around his purpose in reference to the reestablishment of the bloodline of David. Beginning here is the continuation of the genealogy of Ram that stopped with Jesse in 2:17. Thus the remainder of 1 & 2 Chronicles deals with the restoration of the lineage of David and the events surrounding the Davidic kings of Judah. The reason for this is that the Messiah would come through the genealogy of David, for God had promised that He would set one of David's descendants on the throne of David in Jerusalem (2 Sm 7). ***Born to him in Hebron:*** While living in Hebron for seven and a half years, six sons were born to David. ***Born to him in Jerusalem:*** David lived in Jerusalem a little over 32 years. Nine sons were born to him in Jerusalem. Including births through his concubines, he had at least 19 sons, plus at least one daughter. He had at least ten concubines through whom he had sons (2 Sm 15:16). ***Bathshua:*** Or, Bathsheba.

3:10-16 From David to Josiah sixteen generations of father-to-son rulers sat on the throne in Jerusalem. After this succession of kings, there were four sons of Josiah, and then a grandson and great grandson through Jehoiakim. What must be understood is that the God-anointed kings actually ended with Josiah, for the remainder of the kings were appointed by the foreign powers of either Egypt or Babylon. The rightful heirs to sit on David's throne in Jerusalem had to be anointed by God, not by foreign powers. ***Johanan:*** This person is not mentioned in any other Bible text. ***Shallum:*** Or, Jehoahaz (2 Kg 23:30; 2 Ch 36:1; Jr 22:11). He and Zedekiah had the same mother, but he was not the youngest (See 2 Kg 23:31; 24:18). ***Zedekiah:*** There are two different Zedekiahs in verses 15 and 16. The Zedekiah of verse 16 evidently died before the Babylonian captivity because the listing begins only through Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim. Zedekiah was the last reigning king of Judah before the captivity, but he was not a God-anointed king. He was placed in the kingship position by Babylon. Israel had gone from desiring a king to reign over them to a foreign appointed king. They completed their apostasy to the point that they had no choice in appointing their king.

3:17-24 ***Salathiel:*** Or, Shealtiel. Zerubbabel was possibly the grandson of Shalathiel (See Er 3:2; Hg 1:1; Mt 1:12; Lk 3:27). Zerubbabel led the first return of captives from Babylo-

nian territory in 536 B.C. This listing of descendants helps us to date the writing of the Chronicles by numbering the generations from Zerubbabel. Unfortunately, there is no conclusive number of the generations. Nevertheless, though some individuals may be missing from the list, when we consider the generations that are listed, the favored date before which the Chronicles were written would be around 400 B.C. However, some commentators date the writing of the Chronicles as late as 270 B.C. We must keep in mind that the latter date does not argue against the inspiration of the books.

Chapter 4

4:1-23 This would possibly be an incomplete genealogy that parallels the listing that is given in 2:3-17,21-41. The five sons in 2:3 and 4:1, however, are not the same. ***Carmi:*** This would be Caleb. ***Perez:*** Or, Pharez, in the lineage of David. ***Jabez:*** This person seems to be an exception in reference to most of the leaders, for he prayed to be kept from evil, or calamity. His prayers were answered because of his obedient life in reference to the will of God. His prayer was answered on the condition of his obedience. He was the son of a mother who bore him in a time of great concern over something that is not mentioned. While living in the midst of unrighteousness that surrounded him, he grew to be an honorable man. Being afflicted by his unrighteous environment, he prayed for the blessing of God and the enlargement of his territorial possession. He prayed that he would be kept from evil. All these things God answered because of the sincere obedience of his life. ***Kenaz:*** Othniel was not a descendant from the twelve sons of Jacob, and thus Othniel and Caleb (vss 13,15) were possibly not true Israelites. (See Ja 14:6; 15:17 where it is stated that Caleb was the son of Jephuneh.) ***Netaim and Gederah:*** These names mean "plants" and "hedges," but in this context probably refer to specific cities.

4:24-43 ***Simeon:*** When Israel divided during the reign of Rehoboam, Benjamin and part of Simeon remained with the southern kingdom (See Ja 19:9). It was probably for this reason that Simeon was included here with the lineage of those of Judah. Because the families of Simeon tended to be small, they needed the larger tribal group of Judah for protection (Compare 1 Sm 27:6). ***Princes in their families:*** These were evidently wealthy individuals who were the fathers of influential families. ***To this day:*** This could be a reference to the time when this record was written, or to the time of the events that are here described took place.

Chapter 5

5:1-10 ***Reuben the firstborn of Israel:*** Though he was the firstborn, he was disinherited. Because he was disinherited, Joseph's sons were placed before him (Gn 35:22; 49:3,4). But it was Judah who was given the honor of being the one through whom the Messiah would come. ***Sons of Reuben:*** We are not told why the sons of Reuben are different from those found in other listings (See Gn 46:9; Ex 6:14; Nm 26:5). ***Tilgath-pilneser:*** This is a variant spelling of Tiglath-pileser, or Pul in this and other texts of Chronicles (See 2 Kg 15:29; 16:7). We must keep in mind that the writing and pronunciation of the names and places in the Chronicles is centuries removed from the time most of the individuals lived or places existed. Because of the change both in spelling and pronunciation of Hebrew words throughout these centuries, we would expect this difference in spelling and pronunciation. ***Hagarites:*** The descendants of Hagar through Ishmael (Gn 25:12-18).

5:11-22 The information of Numbers 26:15-18 is omitted in this context. ***Jeroboam:*** Or, Jeroboam II (2 Kg 14:16,28; 15:5,32). ***War with the Hagarites:*** This is probably the same battle that is mentioned in verse 10. ***Put their trust in Him:*** God answered their prayers because they had faith that God was working for them.

5:23-26 ***Half the tribe of Manasseh:*** Half of the tribe of Manasseh settled on the east side of the Jordan River and half settled on the west side of the river.

Chapter 6

6:1-15 The amount of information the writer gives in reference to the Levites and their cities indicates one of the purposes for which the Chronicles were written. That purpose was the restoration of the Levitical priesthood and ministry after the Babylonian captivity. This purpose is emphasized again in chapters 23-26. It was necessary that the Levitical priesthood be reestablished in order to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. This restoration of the Levitical priesthood was a return to God's original plan by which Israel was to be led until the coming of the Messiah. With this restoration to the proper function of the Levites, we view the existence of the kings, who existed only from the anointing of Saul to the Babylonian captivity, as an interlude in Israel's history. With the restitution of the Levities came the restitution of the theocracy. Sons of Levi: The descendants of Nadab and Abihu (24:2; Lv 10:1) are omitted, as well as the descendants of Ithamar. We are not told the reason for this omission which was common in the listings of the Chronicles. It could be that the writer is saying that the sin of Nadab and Abihu was not to be continued in the restored heritage of Israel after the captivity. There are three obvious omissions in the descendants of Aaron. They are Jehoiada (2 Kg 11:15; 2 Ch 22:11), Urijah (2 Kg 16:11,16), and Azariah (2 Ch 26:17,20; 31:10). ***Jehoazadak:*** He was the last priest of Israel as a nation before the captivity of 586 B.C.

6:16-48 Herein is given all the families of the Levites. The genealogies that flowed from the sons of Levi are given, as well as the genealogy that was continued through the oldest son. Since God continued the lineage through Samuel, it is clarified here that Samuel was the son of Elkanah, a Levite. ***Heman ... Asaph ... Ethan:*** Once the temple was constructed, David designated the heritage of these men in order that they be responsible for the music that was associated with the temple. Heman's genealogy is traced in reverse to Kohath (vss 33-38). Asaph is also traced in reverse to Gershom (vss 39-43). The genealogy of Ethan is traced back to Merari (vss 44-47). These genealogies are not complete, since this would entail, as the other genealogies, an extended list of individuals. Lengthy lists of names would not accomplish the purpose for which the writer was seeking to accomplish in giving these lists of genealogies. ***The ark had rest:*** The ark had

been moved with the tabernacle for over 400 years. David terminated the movement of the tabernacle among the tribal territories, and then Solomon stationed the ark permanently in the temple when it was built 480 years after Israel moved from Mt. Sinai.

6:49-53 The information in 49-53 is parallel to verses 1-15, specifically verses 4-8.

6:54-81 It seems that the writer condensed and rearranged the information that was revealed in Joshua 21:1-42. ***Pasture lands:*** The 48 cities for the Levites were given to the sons of Aaron. The pasture lands around the cities were given for the animals that were brought to the Levites for offerings, which offerings were to be eaten by the Levites who dwelt in the cities. ***Cities of refuge:*** Of all the cities that were given to the Levites, six were designated as cities of refuge (Ja 20:7,8). These were cities to which one could flee if he accidentally killed someone. If one were allowed into the city he had to reside there until the death of the high priest, after which he was free to return home. Thirteen cities were given to the Kohathites, thirteen to the sons of Gershom, and twelve to the sons of Merari (Ja 21). There were to be three cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan and three on the west side (Nm 35). There were an additional 42 cities given from all the tribes to the Levites, making a total of 48 cities for the Levites. By comparing the records of Joshua 21 and verses 54-81 here, the refuge cities would be the following: Kedesh (6:72; Ja 21:32), Shechem (6:67; Ja 21:21), Hebron, or Kirjath Arba (6:57; Ja 21:13), Bezer (6:78; Ja 21:36), Ramoth (6:73; Ja 21:38), and Golan (6:71; Ja 21:27). ***Gezer:*** Of all the cities that are mentioned in this chapter, Gezer is by far the most historical and strategic in reference to the security of Israel. It was located on the southern border of Ephraim's territory (Ja 21:21). It was situated in the coastal trade route between Egypt and any northern country that desired to do trade with Egypt. It was also located astride the main territory that led from the coast to the hill country on the east. Thutmose III, on an inscription in Egypt, claims to have conquered this city in the 15th century B.C. During the time of Amenhotep IV in the 14th century B.C., the inhabitants of Gezer seem to have at that time been under the control of Egypt, since they sought assistance from Egypt in their conflicts with the Canaanites. The Amaran Letters are ancient correspondence documents between the inhabitants of Gezer and Egypt concerning events that affected them in reference to the Canaanites. By the end of the 13th century B.C., Pharaoh Memeptah claims in his description of his campaigns into Palestine, victory over Gezer. Gezer was later occupied by the Philistines during the latter period of the judges in Israel and the early part of the reign of Saul. 1 Kings 9:16 states that an unknown Pharaoh captured and burned the city, and later presented it to Solomon's daughter. With Hazor and Megiddo, Solomon strongly fortified Gezer because of its importance to the security of Israel (1 Kg 9:15). Near the end of the 10th century B.C., Gezer was destroyed by Pharaoh Sheshonk I (Shishak) (1 Kg 14:25).

Chapter 7

7:1-5 The genealogies of Zebulun and Dan are ignored in the genealogical listings of the Chronicles. Those of the tribes of Issachar and Asher are noted because of the valiant soldiers who came from these two tribes. As with the spelling of the names, the variations can be noted by comparing the names in verses 1-5 with those that are listed in Genesis 46:13 and Numbers 26:23-25, keeping in mind that the spelling of the names in the Genesis and Numbers accounts were written about one thousand years before the writing of the Chronicles. In reference to the numbers, compare the result of the numbering of Moses' day (Nm 1:29) and a later numbering that took place in Numbers 26:25. It seems that the time of conflict during these years was not conducive to population growth.

7:6-12 The genealogy of Benjamin given here does not agree with the one that is given in the following chapter, nor with the genealogies in Genesis 46:21 and Numbers 26:38. Some have assumed that this genealogy is actually that of Zebulun, assuming that a scribal error occurred because the first son of each son started with the name Bela. But then other Bible students have conjectured that Dan is left out because of the extreme idolatry that was practiced by this tribe since it was the northern most tribe of Israel, and thus was in close association with the idolatrous nations to the north of Palestine. Dan was also left out of the listing of Revelation 7:5-8.

7:13 See Gn 46:24,25; Nm 26:48-50.

7:14-19 This listing seems to be incomplete in reference to the listing of Numbers 26:29-34. The list in Numbers mentions four additional families. But we must keep in mind that it was not the purpose of the writer of the Chronicles to give the genealogy of every family of Israel with a list of all descendants. It was his purpose to give a condensed list of names in the genealogies of selected families, specifically the Levites, in order to establish the succession of descendants for the existence of Israel after the Babylonian captivity, specifically to identify those of the tribe of Levi.

7:20-29 Variant spellings of the names can be found by comparing this listing with Numbers 26:35,36. Regardless of the differences in spelling, the interpreter must keep in mind that both listings are accurate in reference to the names. Moses' record of the genealogy was written about one thousand years before 1 Chronicles. The spelling and pronunciation of the words of the Hebrew language changed throughout the centuries. ***Take away their livestock:*** This raid is nowhere recorded in other texts, but does explain the raiding parties ("bands") of nations that invaded Israel. Since Israel was a farming community, others came to raid their lands for food and livestock. The oppression that is often stated in other texts of their history was in reference to the continual raids that were made on the farms of Israel.

7:30-40 ***Sons of Asher:*** As the writer completes the genealogies of the tribes of Israel, we should not be confused by his intentional failure to omit most of the tribes of Israel, specifically Zebulun and Dan. It was not the intention of the writer to make a full accounting of the descendants of the tribes who returned to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. The writer's focus was primarily on Judah and the Levites and the reconstruction of the temple with the renewal of the Levitical ministry. It was not to give a listing of every tribe that came

back into the land. Therefore, because there is no mention of most of the tribes of the north, we must not assume that these tribes were lost and assimilated into the nations of the world after the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C. Since God promised all tribes that the Messiah would come from the seed of Abraham through Jacob, we must conclude that a remnant of all tribes returned to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity in order to wait for the coming of the Messiah (See comments of Ezra). There is no such teaching as a lost ten tribes of Israel, from whom a remnant did not return to Palestine to await the Messiah.

Chapter 8

8:1-40 The genealogy from Benjamin to King Saul is recorded in this chapter, though the names of 7:6-12 do not always correspond with this listing. The information of 9:35-41 corresponds with 8:29-40 and 1 Sm 14:49-51. The information that is given here emphasized the importance of the house of Saul as the first king of Israel. This information is also given in order to identify Saul and his descendants as those who were rejected from being kings in Israel. God struck Saul's kingship from his family and gave it to the sons of David through Solomon. Unfortunately, the descendants of Benjamin that are given here are difficult to understand in reference to Genesis 46:21 and Numbers 26:38-40. It may be that most of the names that are given here, as Ono and Lod, were cities in which people who lived after the captivity (See Er 2:33; compare 1 Ch 8:28; 9:3; Ne 11:4). Nevertheless, the fact that the apostle Paul could trace his family lineage back to the Benjamites is evidence that sufficient records were kept among the Jews in order for each family to know their genealogical heritage (See Rm 11:1; Ph 3:5). ***At Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon:*** See 9:35-44. After the captivity there were settlements of Benjamites in Gibeon, and thus the reason why the writer focused on the descendants of Benjamin in this context. In verse 33 Eshbaal is Ishbosheth. Meribbaal in verse 34 is Mephibosheth.

Chapter 9
REMNANT FROM CAPTIVITY

9:1-9 ***All Israel was enrolled by genealogies:*** This reference is to all twelve tribes of Israel. The writer wants us to understand that no tribe of Israel was lost in the enrollment of the genealogies. The fact that 1 Chronicles was written after the captivity emphasizes the fact that there was no such thing as the lost ten tribes of northern Israel in the mind of the writer. There are some differences between the listing here and the one in Nehemiah 11:1-19. The differences may be in the fact that the 1 Chronicles account was written in 536 B.C. and the Nehemiah account around 444 B.C., a period of almost one hundred years. ***First inhabitants:*** Those who first returned to the land were the priests, Levites and temple servants. ***Judah ... Benjamin ... Ephraim ... Manasseh:*** The specific mention of these tribes excluded the Samaritans who were not true Israelites. The Samaritans were a mix of the Israelites with the peoples the Assyrians had brought into Palestine after their conquest of the northern kingdom in 722/21 B.C. The writer thus made a distinction between the true Israelites and the Samaritans.

9:10-16 ***Ruler of the house of God:*** In the resettlement, the writer did not focus on the restoration of the high priest. The phrase "ruler of the house of God" was applied to the high priest in 2 Chronicles 31:10,13, but not in 2 Chronicles 35:8. Therefore, it would be difficult to assume that reference in this passage was to the high priest. ***Shemaiah ... Mattaniah:*** Most Bible students assume that these leaders lived after the captivity. However, we cannot be certain of this claim. ***Netophasites:*** These were those who dwelt in the city of Netophah, a city or group of villages that were near Bethlehem (Ne 7:26).

9:17-34 See 26:1-19. The term "Nethinim" was applied to the Levites during the time of Moses (Nm 3:9; 8:19). The name was also applied to the Midianites and Gibeonites who assisted the Levites in the temple service (Nm 31:47; Ja 9:27). Since the work of the Gibeonites was connected with the temple ministry, their genealogy was also preserved in Ezra 2:43-58 (Compare Ne 10:28). Since the Gibeonites served at the temple, their genealogy is preserved (Er 4:43-58). They were also considered as a part of the covenant relationship that Israel had with God (Dt 29:11; Ne 10:28). ***David and Samuel:*** Though there is a great deal of information on how David organized the ministries for temple service, little is given in Scripture concerning the work of Samuel concerning management of the tabernacle. Since Samuel lived before David, we would assume that he had organized the tabernacle service, which organization David later adopted for the organization of the temple. We must keep in mind that all this organization was determined by men, not God.

9:35-44 See 8:29-38. This genealogy is an introduction to the reign of David that begins in chapter 10. ***Kish begot Saul:*** The genealogy of Saul is the transition in 1 Chronicles from the listing of genealogies to the historical information that begins with chapter 10.

The Demise Of Saul
(10:1-14)

Outline: (1) Defeat by the Philistines (10:1-7), (2) Humiliation of Saul (10:8-14)

Chapter 10
DEFEAT BY THE PHILISTINES

10:1-7 This chapter is a historical transition from King Saul to King David (See 1 Sm 31:1-13). It is a record of the rejection of the family of Saul as kings of Israel and the acceptance of David and his descendants. The genealogical foundation was established in the book for what the writer from here on recorded concerning the activities of King David and those kings who followed him. In order to introduce the final historical information of 1 & 2 Chronicles, the writer begins here with the humiliating defeat of Israel by the Philistines and the death of Saul and his sons. There is a contrast between the life and death of Saul with that of David. Saul had forgotten God, and thus God allowed his end to be a suicidal death. David, on the other hand, refused to forget God, and thus was allowed to die in peace in old age having never forgotten the faith of

his youth. Saul's kingship heritage was terminated. David's kingship was established.

HUMILIATION OF SAUL

10:8-14 The body of Saul was abused by his enemies who killed him, but the body of David was peacefully laid in a tomb by his friends. The life of Saul was a reminder of where God did not want the leaders of Israel to go, whereas the life of David was an example of one after whom God's heart could be identified. ***For his transgression ... because he consulted a medium for guidance:*** Saul's personal life was not conducted after the will of God for he transgressed the law. For guidance, he consulted one who had created imagined spirits of the dead. These reasons for his death are recorded in order to remind the readers that God is disgusted with those who lead contrary to His will and who seek direction from those who have created fictitious beliefs after their own desires. When a person presumes to be a leader of God's people, but does not lead by consultation with the word of God, then the leader is leading the people away from God. Those who are ignorant of the word of God are always leading people away from God. No ruler has a right to live above the law of God. He has no right to follow those religions that are created after the desires of men.

Administration Of David's Government (11:1 – 12:40)

Outline: (1) Anointing of David (11:1-3), (2) Conquest of Jerusalem (11:4-9), (3) Mighty men of David (11:10-47), (4) Loyal subjects (12:1-22), (5) Subjects in Hebron (12:23-40)

Chapter 11

ANOINTING OF DAVID

11:1-3 (2 Sm 5:1-10) Though there are some difficulties in determining the exact events in the early life of David, the Samuel account of these early events of his life is almost identical with those mentioned in this context. ***We are your bone and your flesh:*** In order for the anointed of God to reign, he had to have the loyalty of the people. In this case, the people gave their allegiance to David after the death of Saul. ***Covenant with them:*** This was a covenant that David made with the people, not God. David made the covenant in order to reaffirm to the people that he would rule after the ordinances of God. Contrary to the latter life of Saul, David pledged that he would always direct the people to God and not to mediums. In order to do this, he was making a promise to lead according to the word of God. Everyone who would lead God's people should make the same covenant with the people they lead. Leaders who lead according to the pronouncements of witches, mediums and soothsayers are false preachers who should be rejected.

CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM

11:4-9 One of David's initial efforts to unite the nation was to centralize his administration of government around a specific location. This was the city of Jebus, which later became known as Jerusalem. It was a stronghold that the Jebusites occupied since the Israelites had entered Palestine over 400 years before (Ja 15:8,63; Jg 1:21). The Jebusites were a Canaanite people (Gn 10:15,16). The city of Jebus is mentioned in ancient texts as the Egyptian *Exercration Texts*, the Amarna Correspondence and various Assyrian texts. Two kings of this city-state were Abdi-Hepa and Araunah (2 Sm 24:18). Since the city was on the border between the land allotted to Judah and Benjamin, neither tribe took the city from the Jebusites (Jg 1:8,21). David eventually took the city, but the Jebusites remained in the area until the days of Solomon, who eventually subjected the Jebusites to forced labor (1 Kg 9:20,21). They were eventually assimilated into the population of Israel, and thus lost their identity in history.

It was not in God's plan that Israel have a king. The nation was to be a theocracy, that is, a nation of people who were ruled directly by God through the Levites. This system had worked well for over 400 years until Israel's cry for a king, the first being Saul. The Israelites first rejected God from ruling over them, but He accommodated their desires. The same happened in reference to David's choosing of Jerusalem as a capital. David led Israel to centralize government around a city in the territory of Judah. By the end of David's reign, a third historical mistake happened when David made plans to centralize the religion of Israel around a temple. Neither the king, capital city nor the temple were in the original plans for Israel. Nevertheless, God accommodated Israel's change in His original plan. But with the changes, they reaped the negative consequences of their changes. The selection of a king established a series of rulers who became evil, and subsequently led the people after foreign gods. The rapidity of this apostasy was evidenced in the life of Solomon who submitted to the influence of his many wives who led him after their idol gods. The centralization of government around one city minimized the importance of the Levitical cities to which the people were to go for counselling, judgments and instruction in the word of God (See Hs 4:6). The northern tribes were especially marginalized by the location of government in Jerusalem. The construction of the temple marginalized the importance of the tabernacle that was to be moved from one tribal area to another. In fact, after the construction of the temple nothing else is said of the tabernacle throughout the Old Testament. The altars that were built by Jeroboam in Bethel and Dan were eventually built because the northern tribes were too far from the temple in Jerusalem. The centralization of the king, capital and temple in Jerusalem eventually led to the division of the kingdom, and subsequently aided in the apostasy of the northern kingdom as kings after Jeroboam followed in his sins. God allowed the change in His original plans, but the Israelites had to live with the consequences of following after their own desires.

MIGHTY MEN OF DAVID

11:10-47 David's success to bring the nation together under his rule was because he had surrounded himself with very capable men (2 Sm 23:8-39). These mighty warriors aligned themselves with David while Saul was still reigning. They had great influence in the lives of the people when David

eventually ascended to the throne in Jerusalem. ***David would not drink of it:*** This event is recorded in order to show the loyalty of David toward his men. They had risked their lives to bring David water, but David refused the water because of his identity with his men. Their daring venture manifested the extremity of their loyalty to him, but his denial of the water manifested the extremity of his loyalty to them. ***Lifting up his spear against three hundred men:*** Every culture needs heroes. The actions of the bravery of these men was recorded in order to instill in the hearts of the readers until the coming of the Messiah, the bravery by which the Jews would have to maintain in order to preserve their existence. The strength of their culture was defined by the strength of their heroes against their enemies.

Chapter 12
LOYAL SUBJECTS

12:1-7 The information in this context concerning David is found nowhere else in the Bible (See 1 Sm 22:2; 27:8; 29:11; 2 Sm 2:3). ***Came to David to Ziklag:*** Even before the death of Saul, David's army grew because people became disenchanted with Saul and his turn from the word of God. These initial men of David's army were convinced that he was to be the next king of Israel.

12:8-15 The Gadites came to David from the east side of the Jordan. As the Benjamites, the Gadites proved their loyalty to David before the death of Saul by coming to him at this time. Others came to David after Saul was killed in the battle with the Philistines. They proved their loyalty to David by joining with him while Saul was still king.

12:16-18 ***The stronghold of David:*** This was probably the cave of Adullam (1 Sm 22:1,2). ***If you have come peacefully:*** David accepted all those who came to him while he was in flight from Saul. He especially received those who came from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. ***Amasai:*** This is probably a reference to Amasa (2 Sm 17:25; 19:13).

12:19-22 Previous to the event mentioned here David had joined the Philistines when he was fleeing from Saul. However, after the Philistines sent him away because they feared that he would turn on them, the men of Manasseh then came to David. At this time all seemed to realize that the fate of Saul was sealed. They knew that David had been anointed to be king, and thus the men of Manasseh were now more assured that David would live to become king. It was at this time that David went to Ziklag to take the city from the Amalekites (1 Sm 30).

SUBJECTS IN HEBRON

12:23-40 The numbers are listed in this accounting of men in order to show the growing strength of David while he was in Hebron. Those who had previously been loyal to Saul now came to David. Their frustration with the evil ways of Saul turned them to the righteous ways of David. The growth of the supporters of David, therefore, could be viewed as a restoration to God in Israel. They knew how David feared God, and thus when they came to David they knew that they were coming to one who had given himself to follow God. ***Understanding of the times:*** This unique statement that was made concerning the men of Issachar revealed that there were some in Israel who had special knowledge of foreign affairs. Because they had this knowledge they could give wise counsel concerning what decisions David should make. David surrounded himself with wise and capable people. Good leaders know how to surround themselves with those who know things they do not specifically know. ***There was joy in Israel:*** Even those from Issachar, Zebulun and Naphtali to the far north in Palestine came to David. It is significant to note that during the time of Moses the army of Israel numbered 603,550 men. The army numbered 1,300,000 by the end of David's reign (2 Sm 24:9). The total figure given by the writer here, 350,000, was a conservative number. Reference was probably only to those who came to David at the very beginning of his reign.

David And The Ark
(13:1 – 17:27)

Outline: (1) Wrong movement of the ark (13:1-14), (2) David's victories and family (14:1-17), (3) Ark moved to Jerusalem (15:1 – 16:43), (4) David plans for the temple (17:1-27)

Chapter 13
WRONG MOVEMENT OF THE ARK

13:1-4 (2 Sm 6:1 – 7:29) Once he had moved to Jerusalem, the most important thing for David was to move the ark of the covenant from the house of Abinadab in Kirjath Jearim to Jerusalem.

13:5-14 ***David and all Israel played before God:*** This was a case where the intentions of the people were good, but they failed to act according to the law of God. Good intentions do not set aside the law of God. They were excited about moving the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, but they ignored the law of God concerning how the ark was to be moved. ***Uzza put forth his hand:*** Uzza paid the price for either their ignorance of how the ark was to be properly transported, or because of their belief that God's law could be ignored because of their good intentions, or both. Whatever the case, the ark was to be carried with poles on the shoulders of the priests. Here, they had loaded it in an ox cart. ***David was afraid of God:*** God is love, but when it comes to obedience to His law, we must with fear approach Him. He is a just God. And being a just God means that He must punish the wicked according to law in order to be just before the righteous. Good intentions on the part of man do not set aside His will. God does not change His law because of a sincere heart. The strictness of the judgment that was poured out immediately in this case reminded David and all Israel that great respect must be given to the law of God. ***House of Obededom:*** Obededom was a Levite (26:4).

Chapter 14
DAVID'S VICTORIES & FAMILY

14:1-7 (2 Sm 5:11-25) ***Hiram:*** There were two Hirams who worked in building the temple. This Hiram was the king of Tyre, and the other Hiram was in charge of building the temple. ***Solomon:*** The future king of Israel was first introduced here as the fourth son of David. He was one of the

thirteen children who were born to David while he lived in Jerusalem (3:5-8).

14:8-12 ***The Philistines:*** Those with whom David had formerly associated while in flight from Saul, gathered themselves against him when they heard that he was anointed king over all Israel. In this case this was a preemptive attack against David. They surely thought that before David could assemble a great army from all Israel, they could defeat him. But this was not to be. This defeat of the Philistines at Baal-perazim was the beginning of David's victories over the Philistines that would eventually lead to their total subjugation by the end of the reign.

14:13-17 Contrary to what would later be typical of future kings of Israel, David was careful to consult God first before going into battle. The strategy that was given by God in this case was that David not attack the Philistines from the front, but to attack them from behind. ***When you hear a sound of marching:*** It is difficult to determine the meaning of what is here stated. It could be that David's men were to wait in hiding in some place until they heard a signal from God above as a rustling of the leaves in the tops of the mulberry trees. ***Fear of him on all nations:*** The strength of the army of David intimidated others from making preemptive attacks on Israel, as the Philistines did on this occasion. David was a strategic military leader. His leadership was manifested in either conquering or subjugating the enemies of Israel who resided in the land that was given to Israel as the promised land. We would assume that God brought David to the throne of Israel for this very purpose. He was to complete what Saul failed to do, that is bring all the promised land under the control of the Israelites.

Chapter 15
ARK MOVED TO JERUSALEM

15:1-15 David had learned his lesson. He read his Bible. He made preparations for moving the ark according to the will of God. He called for the Levites and instructed them to sanctify themselves according to the law. ***Bore the ark ... on their shoulders with the poles:*** In the initial attempt to move the ark to Jerusalem, Uzza had evidently touched the ark with hands that were not sanctified. At that time the ark was being carried in an ox cart instead of on the shoulders of the priests.

15:16-24 It was the responsibility of the Levites to move the ark from one location to another. In this context, those who are mentioned are Levites who had sanctified themselves for the purpose of moving the ark. For four centuries the Levites had properly moved the ark with the movement of the tabernacle. But just one presumptuous movement on the part of David in his zeal to serve the Lord caused the death of Uzza (14:10,11). What took place on this occasion was actually contrary to the will of God, but at the same time accommodated by God. God's original intention was that the tabernacle, with the ark, be moved among the tribal territories (See comments 17:5,6). This practice had been carried out for almost 400 years. But at this time the ark was being moved to a permanent location. It was being "claimed" by the tribe of Judah. Because of the permanent placing of the ark in Jerusalem, those of the northern tribes would continually be too far from it in order to come annually for their sacrifices. Eventually, Jeroboam would take advantage of this locating of the ark. He would build altars in both Bethel and Dan, thus dividing Israel until the return of the remnant from Babylonian captivity. God allowed the ark to be permanently located in Jerusalem, but He also allowed Israel to suffer the consequences of this action. We must never assume that because God accommodated something to happen, that we will not have to live with the consequences of our actions in going beyond His will.

15:25-29 The movement of the ark to Jerusalem was a great national event. The movement thus took place with great celebration. ***She despised him in her heart:*** The response of Michal was probably more than a response to David's exuberant display in celebration. She was the daughter of Saul, who, with her brothers, could have enjoyed this celebration with her family. Instead of her father and her brothers celebrating such an event, she had to share the event with David and all his other wives. Her father and brothers had been killed by the Philistines. As a king's daughter, there may have been bitterness still in her heart concerning the position in which history had now placed her (See 2 Sm 6:16-23). We must also not forget that David took Michal from her husband who greatly loved her (2 Sm 3:12-16). We can only imagine that she still resented him for doing this.

Chapter 16

16:1-6 ***The tabernacle:*** We would assume that David and most of the Israelites who were dwelling in Jerusalem at this time, were living in stone-built houses, houses that they had taken from the former Jebusite residents. It is interesting, therefore, that David made a tabernacle (tent) for the ark. It seems that he knew that this was the proper location for the ark, for the ark had been in several tents since it was placed there 400 years before (17:4-6).

16:7-36 In worship to God it was only natural that David express his thanksgiving for all that God had done for him to this point in his reign. This inspired song of praise gave glory to God for His marvelous work through the nation of Israel (See Ps 96:1-13; 105:1-15; 106:1,47,48). Verses 7-16 are an exhortation to the people to honor God for what He does for His people. Verses 17-22 recall all that God had done for the nation in the past. Verses 23-36 are special words of worship and praise for the God of Israel. ***He comes to judge the earth:*** This statement in verse 33 seems to reveal a final coming of the Lord in judgment on the earth. The eschatology of Israel at this time in their history included the concept of a final judgment (Hb 9:27). Though most of the Old Testament focuses on the history of the sin of Israel and the prophets' call for repentance, within the exhortation of the prophets are teachings concerning the final accountability of every person (See comments Ez 18).

16:37-43 The tabernacle had been moved to Gibeon after Saul killed the priests in Nob (1 Sm 22:19). While the tabernacle was at Gibeon, Zadok, under the reign of Saul, was the acting high priest. When David built a tabernacle (tent)

in Jerusalem, and subsequently moved the ark to Jerusalem, Asaph was appointed to supervise the tabernacle ministries.

Chapter 17
DAVID PLANS FOR THE TEMPLE

17:1-15 (2 Sm 7:1-29) The plans of David in reference to his dream concerning the construction of the temple must be considered very carefully. The Bible student must keep in mind God's original instructions concerning the tabernacle and those who were to carry out all ministries that were associated with the tabernacle. Special note should be made concerning things that Israel later added, but were not mentioned in God's original instructions in the law. The law that was given at Mt. Sinai did not include the construction of a permanent structure in which the ark was to be located. The ark and tabernacle were to be moved among the tribal territories in order that no one tribe lay claim to the tabernacle. The continual movement of the ark among the tribal territories would prevent any one tribe from being consigned to being always too far from the tabernacle in order to come before the Lord for the annual sacrifices. The continual movement of the tabernacle also prevented any one tribe from taking ownership of the tabernacle. ***The ark ... remains under curtains:*** The statement in verse 1 reflects the thinking of David. It was not a revelation from God. ***Do all that is in your heart:*** This statement was also the desire of a man, that is, the desire of Nathan the prophet. Nathan's statement also seems to reflect his thinking, that he too wanted a temple like the nations around Israel. ***God is with you:*** This statement should be understood as a general statement that God was with David and His reign over Israel. It should not be understood in the sense that Nathan was giving revelation from God for the approval of David's idea for building a temple. This is brought out later as God chided David for the suggestion of building the temple. It was the same response of God to Israel when they desired a king. It was not God's plan that Israel have a king, but He accommodated their desires. David felt guilty about the ark resting in a tent, and thus was moved of his own will to build a permanent structure for its housing. There may have also been some desire on the part of David to do as the kings of the nations at the time, that is build a temple as a part of his own legacy. ***God came to Nathan:*** It was not that Nathan went to God with the request of David, but God came to Nathan that very night in reference to David's suggestion concerning the construction of a temple. God knew what was on David's mind, and thus the message that came was a message of rebuke. ***You will not build Me a house to dwell in:*** Some have wrongly assumed that this statement should be understood in reference to David, that he not personally build the temple because he had engaged in too many wars. But verse 5 qualifies the statement to mean that it was not in God's plan to have a temple constructed in Israel, which temple would be exclusive to those who were too far away to come with their annual offerings on the day of Pentecost. ***From one tabernacle to another:*** These statements in verse 5 explain a great deal about God's use of the tabernacle from the time He gave instructions to build it about 400 years before, to the time David desired to construct the temple. Detailed instructions were given at Mt. Sinai concerning the construction of the tabernacle. The instructions were not given as a blueprint for the temple, but for reconstruction of the tabernacle as each tabernacle deteriorated throughout Israel's use of it until the coming of the Messiah. A tent in those days in the weather would last only ten to fifteen years. Tabernacles, therefore, had to be constructed again and again throughout the history of Israel. This explains why God said He went from tabernacle to tabernacle throughout the history of Israel to the time David took ownership of the tabernacle and ark of God in Jerusalem, something that was not in God's plan. Therefore, we would conclude that God's statements in verses 4-6 are words that chide David for his idea of building a temple. ***Why have you not built Me a house of cedars:*** The fact that God asked David this question affirms that it was never in the mind of God to build the temple. Bible students must always keep this in mind when referring to the temple. God never intended that a king reign over Israel on earth, but He allowed and accommodated a king. God never intended that a permanent structure be built for the ark, but He allowed and accommodated it. However, with both the king and the permanent location of the ark, God also allowed them to suffer the consequences for having both. Evil kings led Israel into idolatry. The permanent location of the ark moved the northern tribes to separate themselves from Judah. In order to perpetuate the separation, Jeroboam built altars in Bethel and Dan. Kings after him continued in his sin by discouraging people from going to the permanently located ark of the covenant in Jerusalem. Instead, they went to the altars in Bethel and Dan for their annual sacrifices. ***I have been with you wherever you have walked:*** The pronouncements of God in verses 7-14 indicate why David came up with the idea of the temple. It was not simply a matter of moving the ark from a tent to a stone structure. It was not simply a matter of guilt on the part of David. In God's exhortation in this context, it seems that David was feeling somewhat insecure. Therefore, God reminded him that He had always been with him in protecting him from his enemies. God said that He had preserved Israel from the time He took them out of Egypt to the day of David's reign. He reminded David that He had subdued all his enemies. ***He will build Me a house and I will establish his throne forever:*** In this statement God turned from the physical to the spiritual. David would not be allowed to build a physical temple. Only Solomon would be able to do this. However, the house that God would build would be a house with a throne of authority that would last forever. It would not be a house of this world, but a spiritual house that was eternal in the heavens (See comments 1 Tm 3:15). The Messiah would come to sit on David's throne and reign from heaven over His house, the church. ***Settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever:*** Solomon would not be settled in the temple, if we were to understand this statement literally. In the statement God transitioned from the physical idea of a temple on earth about which David was dreaming, to the spiritual house of God and His kingdom reign from heaven. The authority of God would be manifested through the throne of David when Solomon sat upon it (See comments 2 Sm 7).

17:16-27 The righteousness of David was manifested in his response to God's denial of his building a temple. He submitted in humility, knowing that the eternal plan of God must be worked out in the affairs of Israel. He was not presumptuous against the plan of God. Though he did not understand all that God was doing in bringing the Messiah into the world through Israel, by faith he submitted to God's will in his life. His response is an example of those who would walk by faith, not sight. Though we do not understand all of God's plans, we understand enough to walk by faith, trusting that He will perform His promises. As He fulfilled His promises to Israel, so will He fulfill His promises to us.

David's Eventful Reign (18:1 – 22:19)

Outline: (1) Victory over kings (18:1-17), (2) Victory over Ammonites and Syrians (19:1-19), (3) Victory over Ammon and the Philistines (20:1-8), (4) The sin of numbering (21:1 – 22:19)

Chapter 18
VICTORY OVER KINGS

18:1-13 (2 Sm 8) This chapter is a summary of the offensive wars that David conducted in order to secure the land of Palestine for Israel. The fact that he conducted so many successful campaigns was evidence of both his ability as a military leader, as well as the confidence the people had in him as a leader. ***Gath:*** See 2 Samuel 8:1-14. ***Hamath:*** The northern extent of David's victories went as far north as Hamath, even to the Euphrates River. ***The River Euphrates:*** Other than the Jordan River, this river, with the Tigris River, played a very significant role in the events of the Bible (Gn 2:14; 15:18; Ja 1:4). The area between the two rivers is called Mesopotamia which is located primarily in modern Iraq. The Euphrates River is about 2,871 kilometers (1,780 miles) long and the Tigris River is about 1,848 kilometers (1,146 miles) long. The Assyrian Empire originated in the northern Mesopotamian area, with Nineveh as its capital. The Babylonian Empire was seated in the southern part of Mesopotamia with Babylon as its capital. Ancient cities as Carchemish, Mari, Babylon and Ur were located on the banks of the Euphrates River. ***David brought much bronze:*** Throughout all his campaigns against the enemies of Israel who occupied the land of promise, David collected a great amount of spoils. These spoils were later used by his son Solomon to build the temple. Almost all the metals that were used in the building of the temple, therefore, came from the victories that Israel had over her enemies. Unfortunately, when Israel went into apostasy these same treasures would become the spoils of the nations that took Israel into captivity. ***The Edomites:*** Edom was at the southern extremity of the land of Palestine. Working under the command of David (2 Sm 8:13), and while David was possibly in the northern regions of the land, Abishai secured the southern borders of the promised land by defeating the Edomites.

18:14-17 ***Over all Israel:*** We would assume that reference here was not only to the people, but to all the land that David had secured, which land was given to Israel by God as their promised land. ***Chief ministers:*** Under the leadership of their father, David's sons learned the skills of administration. Here they are called "chief ministers," though in 2 Samuel 8:18 they are called priests. However, David's sons were not Levites, and thus the Hebrew word for "priests" in the Samuel passage simply defines the ministry of the sons, not their position before God.

Chapter 19
VICTORY OVER THE AMMONITES & SYRIANS

19:1-5 (2 Sm 10:1-19) David was known as a man of war. It would be easy, therefore, for the Ammonites to misunderstand his sending of messengers to greet them. Unfortunately, their misunderstanding resulted in their defeat. Lest we justify the humiliation of David's messengers because of the misunderstanding, we must recognize that the messengers of any nation should be treated in such a manner.

19:6-15 ***Repulsive to David:*** Or, despised in his eyes. What should they have expected from the manner by which they treated David's messengers? ***1,000 talents of silver:*** The magnitude of the silver exemplifies the great fear the Ammonites had of David. In 2 Chronicles Amaziah hired 100,000 men for just 100 talents of silver (2 Ch 25:6).

19:16-19 This text says that David killed 7,000 men "who fought in chariots," whereas the 2 Samuel 10:18 says he killed 700 charioteers. The difference in the numbers can be explained in the fact that the charioteers drove the chariots while the armed men in the chariots carried out the battle. Other than this explanation, some have assumed that there is a variant reading in reference to the number 7,000, and thus, the text should actually read 700.

Chapter 20
VICTORY OVER AMMON & THE PHILISTINES

20:1-3 (2 Sm 12:26-31) When kings go out to battle: This would be sometime after the spring rains. In this record of the Chronicles, the writer maintains his focus on the obedient actions of David, thus omitting the sin of David with Bathsheba (2 Sm 11:4 – 12:24). ***Rabbah:*** This was the Ammonite capital. It was located on a major caravan trading route, and thus enjoyed great prosperity. The discovery of ancient artifacts reveals that this city had contact with Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Phoenicia, Midian and Babylon unto the 5th century B.C. This was the location of the iron bed of Og of Bashan (Dt 3:11). ***The crown:*** The richness of the crown was evidence of the richness of the city. As a result of this victory, a great deal of spoil was taken, which spoil was later used in the construction of the temple. ***Put them to work:*** The Hebrew word here suggests that he put them to extreme forced labor. The original KJV reading is misleading in the sense that it paints a picture that David's men sadistically cut the people in torture. Later translations have corrected this unfortunate rendering.

20:4-8 (2 Sm 21:18-22) ***Born to the giant in Gath:*** We would assume from this reading that there were other members of the family of Goliath. It was only Goliath who stood against and was killed by David when he was yet a young man.

Chapter 21
THE SIN OF NUMBERING

21:1-8 ***Satan ... moved David:*** Since it is God who restrains Satan, then God would assume the responsibility for David following after his pride to number the fighting force of Israel (See 2 Sm 24:1). Throughout the history of Israel, God had proved that He fought for Israel. If He had not, then they would never have become a nation. David was here seeking to trust in his own military genius and strength. It was a slap in the face of God, and thus a sinful act. David carried out this numbering of his military strength without first consulting the Lord, and thus it was one time in the life of David that he ignored God in order to follow after his own pride.

21:9-13 God gave David the option of choosing between **(1)** three years of famine, **(2)** three months of humiliating war that would lead to defeat, or **(3)** three days of pestilence (2 Sm 24:13). He chose the latter of the three. Thus others had to pay for David's sin of pride. ***I have sinned greatly:*** It seems that David realized his sin before God came to him with the three options from which to choose his own punishment.

21:14-17 ***Let Your hand ... be on me:*** One of the great characteristics about David was that he assumed the responsibility for his own actions. He never blamed others for his sin.

21:18-30 ***I will not take for the Lord what is yours:*** A sacrifice is nothing if it is not paid by the one who gives it. Only by giving that which belongs to oneself is there true fellowship with God to whom the sacrifice is given. ***He was afraid because of the sword of the angel:*** The entire episode struck fear in the heart of David. And rightly so. In this case, David was able to experience openly the direct and immediate hand of God in punishment for his own sinful pride. If we could experience the same today, we too would recoil in fear before the Lord. Though we reap what we sow (Gl 6:7,8), there is a final punishment coming for our sin. But when it comes it will be too late for repentance (2 Co 5:10; Hb 9:27).

Chapter 22

22:1-5 It could be that David's remorse over his sin of numbering Israel was the stimulus for determining the site for the construction of the temple, and his preparations to gather materials for its construction. The temple would be built on the land that he had bought from Ornan for his personal sacrifice for the sin he committed in numbering Israel. ***Foreigners:*** These would be the Canaanites whom the Israelites had subjugated to be forced labor (2 Ch 8:7-10). ***Magnificent, famous and glorious:*** From these words we get the impression that David was somewhat in competition with the temples of the surrounding nations. In order to give the impression that God was the only God, he wanted to build a temple that exceeded the lavishness of the temples of the nations.

22:6-16 ***Solomon:*** Before he died, David designated Solomon as his successor. The wisdom in this was to prevent rivalry between the sons of David after his death. Once Solomon was anointed as David's successor, before he died David could observe the behavior of the other sons in reference to their acceptance of Solomon as their king. ***It was in my mind to build a house:*** David here admitted that the building of the temple was his idea, not God's. However, God sanctioned this desire of David, and thus God claimed the temple after it was built. But we must not forget that the temple was never in the original plan of God for Israel. ***You have shed blood abundantly:*** If the individual tribal groups had fulfilled their duties after the conclusion of the national wars of Israel that were led by Joshua, then David would never have had to complete the task of clearing the land of the Canaanites. He would not have had many years of war as is mentioned in this context. Nevertheless, because he was a man of war, God did not allow him the privilege of fulfilling his dream of building a temple. This task was left to Solomon, a king who inherited a kingdom of peace from his father.

22:17-19 Because Solomon was unskilled for the task set before him, David instructed the leaders of Israel to come to his aid. This statement was made of Solomon before Solomon had been blessed by God with great wisdom.

Administration Of The Temple & Nation (23:1 – 29:25)

Outline: (1) Temple ministers (23:1 – 26:28), (2) National leaders (26:29 – 27:34), (3) Charge to Solomon (28:1 – 29:20), (4) Ascension of Solomon (29:21-25)

Chapter 23
TEMPLE MINISTERS

23:1-23 In the organization of the leaders of Israel, David dealt with the religious leaders first (23:3 – 26:32). He then organized the civil and military leaders (27:1-34). The Levites served from 30 years of age to 50 (Nm 4:3,47). We would assume that the great numbers of those who are given religious responsibilities are in view of the final construction of the temple that would come later. David not only made preparations for the building of the temple before he died, but also for the administration of temple affairs. David was a compulsive organizer. His organizational skills were manifested in his many military victories. In order to aid his son Solomon, he organized the administration for the temple. It seems that David did this organization because he knew that such would be too great a strain on the young Solomon when he became king. The organization of duties, therefore, would have been based on his command, not the command of the young Solomon.

23:24-32 ***Twenty years:*** In view of the 30 years that is mentioned in verse 3, it seems that the 20 years of age mentioned here would qualify one for certain temple duties, possibly giving a person ten years of apprenticeship before assuming full responsibilities at the age of 30 (Compare Nm 8:24; 2 Ch 31:17; Er 3:8). ***Sons of Aaron:*** The duties for the sons of Aaron were specific. Their ministry was focused on everything that involved the sacrifices, from the gathering of the wood, preparing the animals to be sacrificed, and carrying out the actual sacrifices. All ceremonial washings and offerings were in their care (See Nm 3:5-10; 18:1-7). The generations from Aaron had the responsibility of sacrificial duties.

Chapter 24

24:1-19 The descendants of the two sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, were divided into 24 groups to administer the priestly duties. Each Levite was chosen by lot and assigned in groups in order to minister for a week, beginning on the evening of the Sabbath.

24:20-31 The list of Levites in this context was of the sons of Aaron who were listed in verses 1-19. These were assigned to be assistants to the priests. This list included only the descendants of Kohath and Merari. When considering the "sons" of these lists the Bible student must keep in mind that the phrase "son of" sometimes skips a generation. Though we are not informed in the text the phrase "son of" should sometimes be understood to mean the "descendant of." When comparing different genealogical lists of the same family, this practice on the part of the biblical writer should be noted.

Chapter 25

25:1-31 ***Prophesy with harps:*** As the sweet singer of Israel, we would expect nothing less from David. The invention of musical sounds by David was surely the beginning of what later in Israel's apostasy became a thing that was an irksome sound before God (See Am 6:5). When they went into apostasy, Amos preached the words of God that they take away the noise of their songs and stringed instruments (Am 5:23). Though David invented the stringed instruments in sincerity, they eventually became hollow noises from an apostate heart. But in the administration of the temple that David envisioned, he wanted to make sure that the quiet music of harps would play a role in maintaining a tranquil atmosphere during the temple ceremonies. For this reason, the musicians were chosen and divided into 24 divisions. To "prophesy" with a harp meant that one used the music that was produced with the harp to minister to the ears of the hearers. Their purpose in the temple was to produce a tranquil environment for the people. They were not played as a ceremony of worship. In reference to God, however, God seeks the melody of hearts, not harps. The focus of the instrument, therefore, was not on the one who played, but on the one who heard. Using the instrument in this case was not for the purpose of the instrumentalist to present a show of his talent before the people. David sought to focus on developing a tranquil atmosphere in the temple area, knowing that the harp produced such a sound that brought peace of mind.

Chapter 26

26:1-19 Gatekeepers: These would be the doorkeepers who had charge of the entrances of the temple. Since the location of the doorkeepers is difficult to determine, some have suggested that these were the guards for the tabernacle that David had built, and not the temple that was yet to be built. ***Storehouse:*** This may help us understand the purpose for the gatekeepers. We must keep in mind that the royal house and temple were constructed as the treasury for the kingdom. When gold and silver were brought to the capital from tribute, taxation, or from the spoils of war, there was a storehouse for the treasure. The gatekeepers, therefore, were the guards over the national treasury. The treasury went from each individual maintaining his own treasury on the farms to a national treasury that was kept in Jerusalem.

26:20-28 ***Over the treasuries:*** Ahijah was in control of the handling or accounting of that which was in the treasury. Throughout the apostasy of Israel when God continually brought foreign powers upon Israel to punish them for their idolatry, these foreign powers often raided the temple and royal houses of their treasures (See 2 Kg 24:13).

NATIONAL LEADERS

26:29-32 Beginning here is a description of those who were chosen for administration of affairs other than those who were connected with the administration of the temple. These would include administrators as civil officers, military leaders, soldiers and judges.

Chapter 27

27:1-15 (2 Sm 23:8-39) There were to be 24,000 men in each of the twelve divisions of the army. Each division was to serve one month during the year. In this way, each man had one month of service, and eleven months of private life. Thus the fighting men of Israel were not a standing army, but a militia or citizen's army. With this military organization of the citizenry, there was an experienced military officer assigned to each group. The professional military leaders would be the three and thirty of 11:20, with the Kerethites, Pelethites and Gittites.

27:16-24 Those who were chosen as the tribal leaders were to be respected by the people. These were to be the respected elders from whom leadership would come for each tribe. ***Because of this:*** Wrath came from God because of his attempt to number Israel, not because he terminated the numbering after he saw that it was wrong.

27:25-31 These would be the administrators of David's personal property. David acquired his wealth, not by taxation as did Solomon and the kings that followed him, but by the spoils of war and tribute from those he conquered. David earned his wealth as a result of his military struggles to rid the land of the Canaanites. After David, however, Solomon and the kings who followed him gained their wealth primarily by taxation and the continued tribute from nations that David had conquered. They thus lived off the struggles of David and his generation.

27:32-34 This list of individuals is probably a supplement to those who are listed in 18:14-17 and 2 Samuel 23:24-39.

Chapter 28

CHARGE TO SOLOMON

28:1-10 In this discourse of David, he wanted to reaffirm two things. First, he wanted to reaffirm his desire to build a house for the Lord, and second, he wanted to set Solomon before the people as the one who would follow him. In reference to the temple, it was a common thing for kings of ancient times to either build temples or inscribe monuments in memory of the accomplishments of their reigns. The kings would build a lavish royal palace for themselves, and a royal house for their

gods. David certainly had the feeling that his legacy be carried on in the building of the temple, though his son finished the job. The extravagant materials that David assembled, with his personal donation of wealth, assumes that we would give him credit for the existence of the temple. Though Solomon actually laid the materials together in a structure, David did all that he could in assembling the materials for the construction. He could do this in accordance with the command of God because he was not allowed by God to actually build the building. He wanted succeeding generations to know that he wanted a house for Yahweh, the God of Israel (17:13,14; 1 Kg 9:1). Ancient temples were usually constructed on prominent geographical locations, which was true also of the construction of the Jerusalem temple (Ps 121:1; 122:4). The threshing floor on which the temple was constructed was Moriah (2 Ch 3:1). Some have assumed that this was the site where Abraham was called to offer his son, Isaac (Gn 22:2). There are no remains of the temple that David initiated and Solomon built. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. It is believed that only a few stones remain of Herod's temple that he built on the same site in the 1st century B.C. Therefore, the only way Bible historians can imagine the design of Solomon's temple is by the structures of temples that were built by the Canaanites that were contemporary with Solomon. ***Be strong and do it:*** David's exhortation to Solomon was that he build the temple against all discouragement. It was not going to be an easy task, and thus Solomon must exercise great fortitude in bringing the construction to pass.

28:11-21 ***David gave ... the plan:*** If taken by itself, this statement assumes that David made the plans for the temple. But in verse 19 David said that the Lord had inspired him to make the design for the temple. God gave the design for the construction of the original tabernacle, and here He possibly did the same in reference to the building of the temple. However, since there are no details given in Scripture of this plan, then we could assume that the details were designed by David, but the inspiration to draw the plan was given by God. In the design of the tabernacle great detail was given directly by God and written in Scripture as to how it should be built. But we are not informed if this was the case in reference to the temple. We would have to conclude that God knew that the temple would eventually be destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Since there were no plans given in Scripture concerning the construction of the temple, then the returnees from Babylonian exile would have no design to guide them in reconstructing the temple as they did with directions on how to build the tabernacle. The only plans that existed were those of the tabernacle, which tabernacle God intended should be with Israel until the coming of the Messiah. However, David wanted to build a temple, and so God allowed such to be done. It is noteworthy that the metaphors for the presence of God among His people that are used in the New Testament do not find their setting in the temple, but in the tabernacle. ***Gold:*** Gold was used extensively in the construction of the temple. Since gold is only a mineral of this world with no greater value to God than dirt, then we assume that the lavish use of gold in the construction of the temple was for the appeal of man, not God. The design of the temple was directed to appeal to the lust of the eyes of man and to display before the world the wealth of Israel. It could be that God wanted to use the lavishness of the temple to manifest His care of Israel, but we would conclude that the use of such quantity of gold was motivated by men who sought to parade their wealth before the world. What must always be kept in mind is to remember that after Solomon went through all the efforts to enrich Israel, the Pharaoh of Egypt came and plundered the temple within five years after his death (2 Kg 24:13). All of David and Solomon's wealth that went into the building of the temple was gone within less than a generation after the death of Solomon. We would conclude, therefore, that if all the gold that went into the construction of the temple were the plan of God, then certainly God would have preserved the wealth longer than one generation after it was put into the temple. ***For the treasury of the house of God:*** We must keep in mind that the temple and royal house were being built as the national treasury of the nation. Taxes were collected from the people and there needed to be a place where this silver and gold could be stored.

Chapter 29

29:1-9 By giving a great amount of his own wealth to the construction of the temple, David wanted to inspire others to do the same. ***Offered willingly:*** The result was that a great amount of wealth was given in response to the generosity of David. It was not that the people were forced to give, but they were inspired by the leadership of David to give. People will give when their leaders give. If the leaders see themselves as the ones who are to receive wealth from those who make sacrifices to give, then the givers will eventually stop giving. During this time in the history of Israel the entire nation of tribes had come together as one nation under the reign of David. The building of the temple was a stimulus to bring the tribes together as a nation. However, its existence in Jerusalem after the death of Solomon encouraged the division of the tribes into the northern and southern kingdoms. But at this time in their history the plan for its construction brought the tribes together to be one people as the building of the tower of Babel kept the people together after the flood (See Gn 11:1-9).

29:10-20 In response to the giving, David offered a prayer of thanksgiving and praise of God. ***Head above all ... reign over all:*** Before Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father (At 1:9-11), the Father was King and head over all things. But now, after His ascension, Jesus is King of kings and head over all things (Ep 1:22; 1 Tm 6:15). When Jesus comes again, however, He will return all authority to the Father that God may be all in all (1 Co 15:26-28). ***We are foreigners ... and sojourners:*** In his petition before God, David professed the status of all humanity in reference to the eternity of God. God abides forever, but man is only passing through his brief existence upon the earth. If one would lengthen his existence beyond the brevity of life on earth, then he must come into the presence of God, who alone is eternal and can give eternal life (Compare 2 Th 1:6-9).

ASCENSION OF SOLOMON

29:21-25 The response of the people was worship. ***1,000:*** In total, 3,000 animals were given as an offering. In verses 21 & 22 we have defined what took place in reference to offerings. The offerings were animals given for human consumption. Verse 22 explains that they "ate and drank." The offering was from individuals who gave the animals, but the meat of the offering was consumed by everyone. In reference to offerings that were brought to the Levites, the animals were eaten by those who brought the offering in fellowship with the Levites. As in this case, the worship in offerings and sacrifices was given in order to eat with one another at a time of rejoicing. We cannot separate the eating and drinking in verse 22 from the offerings in verse 21. Their worship involved eating and drinking in joyous fellowship with one another and praise of God. ***Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord:*** This statement here and other contexts is significant. Solomon sat on the throne of David. David was the symbol of the authority of God on earth. Therefore, when Solomon sat on the throne of David, he was sitting on the throne of the Lord. He was God's symbol of authority on earth. The prophets foretold the time when One would sit on the throne of David. This prophecy was made specifically to David. The One who would eventually sit on the "throne of David" was Jesus. This is what Peter affirmed in Acts 2:25-28. At the time Peter spoke in Acts 2 Jesus was on the throne of David, and thus all the prophecies concerning One sitting on the throne of David were fulfilled. Therefore, throughout the history of Israel, when a king sat on the throne in Jerusalem, he was sitting on the throne of David, which was the throne of the Lord and a symbol of that which was to come when Jesus eventually sat on the throne. The point is that from our time in history, there are no more prophecies concerning one who would come and sit on the throne of David on earth.

DEATH OF DAVID

29:26-30 The books to which reference is made in verse 29 no longer exist. They were in existence at the time 1 Chronicles was written, which was sometime immediately after the Babylonian captivity. Because they were not inspired books, but simply Jewish histories, there was no need that they be preserved for posterity. ***Seer ... prophet ... seer:*** There are actually three Hebrew words used in verse 29 in reference to Samuel, Nathan and Gad (*ro'eh*, *nabi* and *chozeh*). The word *ro'eh* ("seer") means "to see." As a seer, God gave the person special insight into events and times, especially in reference to what was in the future. *Nabi* ("prophet") is used in order to emphasize what is spoken by the prophet, not what was seen in vision or given as special insight. *Chozeh* ("seer") emphasized seeing or gazing, with emphasis on how the truth was received and proclaimed. *Nabi* is the most commonly used term in reference to the servant of God, and is translated with the word *prophetes* in the Greek Septuagint. This was one who spoke forth the word of God.

2 Chronicles

WRITER

The books of 1 & 2 Chronicles as we have them today in our Bibles were originally one book. They were separated as two with the publication of the Septuagint (See introduction to 1 Chronicles).

DATE

Considering the statements of 36:22,23 we would conclude that the Chronicles were written sometime immediately before the first return of Jews to Palestine after the decree of Cyrus. This would date the book sometime after 536 B.C. and the arrival of the Jews in Jerusalem. Since many of the Jews who did return to rebuild the temple had never before been in Palestine, it would have been a necessary thing for the writer of the Chronicles to educate them concerning the history of Israel. And since the purpose of the first return of exiles was to reinstitute the altar sacrifices and rebuild the temple, then the theme of the Chronicles corresponds to the goal of the first returnees.

In reference to the dating of the reigning kings of Israel, it is sometimes difficult to assign the date for the beginning of their reigns. It is difficult because some kings began their reign in their youth while their fathers were still on the throne. Since adding the time of the reign of the kings end to end adds up to a duration of time that is too long for the time of history that would correspond with history of the world, then we would assume that the beginning of a king's reign often was coregent with his father's reign. Though the Kings and Chronicles do not mention the coregent reign of succeeding kings, we must assume that some of the kings began their reign while their fathers were still the sitting king.

BOOK

2 Chronicles covers a period of Israelite history that begins with the reign of Solomon and extends to the end of the Babylonian captivity by the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia. If we assign the beginning of the reign of Solomon to be around 971 B.C., and the signing of the decree of Cyrus to allow the first captives to return to Palestine to 536 B.C., then the period of time covered would be about 435 years of history that is covered by 2 Chronicles.

Both 1 & 2 Chronicles primarily focus on the religious apostasy of Judah and not the political drama that played itself out with the ascension of kings to the throne of Judah. Most of 2 Chronicles records efforts by noble kings to restore Judah from her persistent fall from the will of God (Asa - ch 15, Jehoshaphat - ch 20, Joash - chs 23,24, Hezekiah - chs 29-31, Josiah - ch 35). The book begins with the glory of Israel during the reign of Solomon, but it ends with an apostate Judah going into Babylonian captivity. One might say that 2 Chronicles is a story of the tragedy of a nation that left the Father of her birth.

Since there is a great deal of emphasis on the building of the temple and its splendor, the writer seems to assume that we, the readers, will conclude that all the wealth and power of the nation did not prevent Israel, and specifically Judah, from going into apostasy. A subplot of the history of 2 Chronicles was that God sought to preserve His people in the land for as long as possible. He thus allowed the people to centralize government in Jerusalem of Judea. By allowing the building of the temple in Jerusalem, He sanctioned Jerusalem as the location for the annual place of sacrifices. Though He allowed such to be done by the kings and the people, these moves eventually encouraged the division of the twelve tribes. The division of the twelve tribes expedited the apostasy of the northern kingdom under the initial leadership of Jeroboam who built altars in Bethel and Dan. Later kings of the north discouraged the northern residents from going to Jerusalem for the annual sacrifices, which journey would have encouraged loyalty to the king of Judah and to the teaching of the Levites. Regardless of the unfortunate results of bad choices on the part of the people, God still remained with the two kingdoms in order to salvage from them a cleansed remnant that would eventually be restored to the land after the captivities.

The northern kingdom went into captivity in 722/21 B.C. Therefore, the inspired historian who wrote the Chronicles focused on the history of Judah as the remnant in the land that would carry the torch of the seedline promise that was made to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). It was Judah that carried on with the remnant of the faithful until the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C. Once Judah had gone into captivity, then God's punishment of His people for their apostasy had been completed. It was then time to await the fulfillment of the prophecies of the return of the remnant from captivity. With that note the writer of 2 Chronicles leaves the readers at the conclusion of Israel's history. Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther take the story from the decree of Cyrus, who allowed the remnant to return to the land of promise, until the period of revelation silence between Old and New Testament history.

Reign Of King Solomon
(1:1 – 9:31)

Outline: (1) Solomon establishes his reign (1:1-17), (2) Solomon plans to build the temple (2:1-18), (3) Solomon builds the temple (3:1 – 5:1), (4) Placement of the ark (5:2-14), (5) Solomon addresses the people (6:1-42), (6) God accepts Solomon's offering (7:1-3), (7) Feast of dedication (7:4-11), (8) Message of blessing and warning (7:12-22), (9) Solomon's achievements (8:1-18), (10) The queen of Sheba (9:1-12), (11) Solomon's splendor (9:13-28), (12) Solomon's death (9:29-31)

Chapter 1
SOLOMON ESTABLISHES HIS REIGN

1:1-6 (1 Kg 1:1 – 11:43) In the early part of his reign, Solomon truly reigned with splendor. However, by the end of his reign it was a different story. His reign ended with a king who had gone after the gods of his many wives. The totality of the reign of Solomon was a picture of the history of Israel from the time of the first kings to the time of the captivities. Israel started with grandeur, but ended in apostasy to other gods. The record of the Chronicles omits Adonijah's revolt (1 Kg 1,2) and his idolatry (1 Kg 11:1-40). Solomon's marriage to foreign women certainly influenced his behavior, and thus led to his fall as a leader. He was not a spiritual leader as his father, David. At first Solomon sought to link the nature of his reign with that of his father, David, by seeking the Lord through offerings. But once he married foreign women, this changed by the end of his reign after he had been influenced by the idolatry of his wives. ***Tabernacle ... high place:*** By the time of Solomon's reign the people had already associated "high places" with locations to which one would go to worship through the offering of sacrifices. As Israel went into apostasy, they retained these locations of worship. However, they brought idolatrous practices into their worship on the high places. The high places, therefore, became a symbol throughout the record of the Kings and Chronicles of the apostasy of Israel. ***Moses ... made in the wilderness:*** This would not have been the exact tabernacle that Moses constructed at the foot of Mt. Sinai. It had been over 400 years since the original tent was made. God had given detailed instructions on how the tabernacle was to be built. He did this for a specific reason. Throughout the 400 years the tabernacle was rebuilt when the canvas wore away. The normal life of the canvas of those days would not have been over ten to fifteen years in the sun. Nevertheless, God expected Israel to rebuild the tabernacle continually through their history.

1:7-12 (1 Kg 3:5-15) David had prayed that Solomon reign with wisdom and understanding (1 Ch 29:10-20). This may have been the stimulus for Solomon to ask God for the same. ***I will give you riches:*** These riches did not come as a result of Solomon's obedience to the will of God. In fact, Solomon digressed in his life from the moral principles of God through marriages to foreign women who encouraged him to honor idol gods. God's blessing with riches, therefore, must have been for another reason. The reason may have been that God wanted to bring Israel to a climax of power and wealth in or-

der to give a lesson of what sin in the lives of the leaders and people would eventually do to the nation. We must keep in mind that it was during the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, that Shishak came up from Egypt and took away all the wealth that Solomon had accumulated throughout his reign. Solomon spent a lifetime accumulating wealth, but it was all gone within five years after his death.

1:13-17 (1 Kg 10:26-29; see 2 Ch 9:13-28) ***Silver and gold ... plentiful as stones:*** This was certainly a vivid description that explained the amount of silver and gold that was amassed by both David and Solomon. However, it seems that Solomon failed to read and obey Deuteronomy 17:14-20. What Solomon did during his reign in reference to wives and wealth was a direct violation of the will of God. For this reason we conclude that Solomon was not blessed by God because of his righteousness. He simply gained the wealth because of his wisdom that was given to him by God.

Chapter 2
SOLOMON PLANS TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

2:1-10 (1 Kg 5:1-18) Hiram was the son of a Danite woman who was married to a man of Tyre. Before Solomon sought the help of King Hiram, he assessed how many skillful men he had in Israel who could do the job of building the temple. Knowing that Israel was primarily a farming culture, the assessing of his own skilled workers was necessary in order to make sure that what he planned and started could be designed and completed by local talent. ***Great is our God above all gods:*** Since it was believed in those days that the splendor of a kingdom was manifested by the splendor of the temple of the nation, Solomon wanted to declare to all travelers who passed through Palestine that his God was greater than all other gods. In the competition between the nations of those times, the greatness and strength of a nation was determined by the greatness and strength of the local god. We would thus question Solomon's motives for building the temple. There was more behind the elaborate structure than simply a structure to honor God. In the competition of deities among the nations, Solomon wanted to guarantee that his God won the prize. ***The heavens ... cannot contain Him:*** When the tabernacle was constructed at the foot of Mt. Sinai, it was to be only a symbol of the presence of God among His people. Solomon was correct in saying that no building could ever contain the one true and living God. The temple was to be built, not to contain God, but to be a manifestation of His presence among His people. When the final building was completed, it measured about 45 feet (14 meters) by 120 feet (37 meters). It was actually a small structure. ***Only to burn sacrifices:*** The temple was not a place of assembly, but only a place to which sacrifices were brought and offered. ***My servants will be with your servants:*** The Israelites worked with Gentiles—those of Hiram's kingdom—in order to build the temple.

2:11-18 ***Huram-abi:*** This could be translated "Huram, my Father's," "Huram, my master craftsman," or "Huram, my trusted counselor." It is worthy to note that the laborers who built the temple were composed of Israelites, with some Canaanites who came from King Hiram. It is for this reason that many believe the design of the structure was after the design of many of the Canaanite temples that were contemporary with the reign of Solomon.

Chapter 3
SOLOMON BUILDS THE TEMPLE

3:1-7 (1 Kg 6:1-38) ***Mount Moriah:*** This was Ornan's threshing floor (Gn 22:2; 1 Ch 21:18). Jerusalem was located on Mt. Moriah and Mt. Zion. The temple was constructed on Moriah, but the city was built on Zion. ***Cubit:*** It is difficult to determine the length of a cubit. Most Bible students have used 45 centimeters (18 inches) as the length of a cubit, though this can be disputed.

3:8-14 ***Cherubim:*** The symbolism of the cherubim was protection. They were located above the ark in order to symbolize God's protection of the covenant (See Ex 25:20). ***Veil:*** See Ex 26:31.

3:15-17 ***Two pillars:*** See 1 Kg 7:15; 2 Kg 25:17; Jr 52:21. The difference in the pillars' heights between this account and that given in the Kings is clarified by the fact that the Hebrew wording in the texts can be easily confused, and thus a variant reading exists here in different Hebrew texts. ***Jachin:*** Meaning, "He will establish." ***Boaz:*** Meaning, "In it is strength" (See comments 1 Kg 3:17). ***Pomegranates:*** This often mentioned tree and its fruit from which articles for religious ceremonies were designed was used in the hanging gardens of Babylon. Though the tree was small in size, its fruit was very refreshing (See 1 Sm 14:2). An archaeological discovery has been made in Jerusalem of a small figure designed after the shape of the pomegranate fruit. It is believed by some that this figure was one of the ornate pomegranates used in the temple (Ex 28:31,33,34; 1 Kg 7:18,20). Articles formed after the shape of the pomegranate fruit were used to symbolize the fertility of the promised land (Nm 13:23; Dt 8:3).

Chapter 4

4:1-10 (1 Kg 7:15-51) ***Altar of bronze:*** See 1 Kg 7:23-50 (Ez 43:13-17). ***Molten sea:*** See 1 Kg 7:23-29. ***Ten lavers:*** These were for the washing (cleansing) of the priests during and after the sacrifices. ***Candlesticks:*** Or, lampstands. ***Tables:*** These were for the showbread. ***Courts:*** There were two courts. One was exclusively used by the priests, whereas the outer court was larger and for other people than the priests (1 Kg 6:36; 7:12).

4:11-22 (1 Kg 7:40-47) The detail that is given in reference to all that Solomon did to build the temple was to remind the initial readers what was later destroyed by Babylon because of the sin of Israel. Keeping in mind that the Chronicles was written sometime after the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C., the initial readers needed to understand that the apostasy of Israel resulted in the destruction of the great temple that Solomon built. Never again in history would such an elaborate temple be built by Israel, for never again would Israel be able to accumulate such great amounts of silver and gold. From the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar, the land of Palestine was plundered of all its wealth by the nations that

occupied the region until the coming of Jesus. The temple of Solomon was a manifestation of the pinnacle of the greatness of the kingdom of Israel. Sin took the nation down from that time unto this present day. The temple was rebuilt when the remnant returned from Babylonian captivity, but not with the grandeur of bronze, silver and gold with which Solomon had built it (Er 3:12). Another temple was built during the reign of Herod the Great, but again, not with all the bronze, silver and gold that Solomon used in the building of the first temple.

Chapter 5

5:1 This verse concludes the narrative concerning the construction of the temple. From verse 2 to the end of chapter 7, the ark is brought into the holy place, the temple is dedicated, sacrifices are made, and God sanctifies the temple.

PLACEMENT OF THE ARK

5:2-14 (1 Kg 8:1-21) In the seventh month of the year, Tishri, the feast of dedication coincided with the feast of tabernacles. It was during these feasts that the ark was brought to Jerusalem in order to be placed in the sanctuary of the temple. At this time in history, the ark contained only the two tablets of stone on which was written the ten commandments of the law. Aaron's rod that budded and the pot of manna were missing. ***There it is to this day:*** This would be the time when the writer of Chronicles inscribed these words. Since the Babylonian captivity took place in 586 B.C., at which time Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and took its artifacts to Babylon, we might assume that the writing of Chronicles took place before 586 B.C. If so, then the last verses of Chronicles concerning the decree of Cyrus would possibly be a prophecy, or more likely, a footnote addition by someone who lived at the end of the Babylonian captivity. Since there is no mention of the ark after the Babylonian captivity, we assume that it was either destroyed at the time Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C., or lost in Babylonia (See Dt 10:2-5; 1 Kg 8:8,9; Hb 9:4). Some have suggested that the ark was taken to Egypt by those who fled Judah immediately before the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. However, we must not discount the assumption that Nebuchadnezzar took the ark, with the rest of the temple articles, to Babylon and placed them in the temple of Babylon. If this is true, then the ark was there when the Chronicles were written after Cyrus gave the decree for the rebuilding of the temple. ***The house was filled with a cloud:*** This was God's signal that He accommodated, and thus approved of the proceedings, the temple, and the placement of the ark in the temple (See Ex 16:10; 24:16; 40:34; Nm 9:15; 1 Kg 8:10,11). All that had transpired to this time in the history of Israel was in view of God's foreknowledge of the fact that Israel was headed for apostasy. He knew that under the leadership of Jeroboam the northern ten tribes would speedily go into apostasy after the division of the kingdom during the reign of Rehoboam. He knew that Jeroboam would set up altars in Bethel and Dan. He knew that the sins of Jeroboam would eventually lead the northern kingdom into Assyrian captivity. For this reason, therefore, God sanctioned the temple in order to be the final resting place of the ark of the covenant until the southern kingdom followed the same path of her sister to the north. Instead of the ark being moved among the territories of the tribes, God allowed it to become stationed in Jerusalem until the final blow came from the Babylonians for the apostasy of Israel. The Bible historian must continually remind himself that God allowed the Israelites the freedom to make choices, which choices would eventually lead to their end. He accommodated their choices, as the building of the temple and the desire for a king, that were not sinful, but were unwise. At the end of their history when they reaped the consequences of their wrong choices, He reminded them that their unfortunate end was the result of their own choosing. What was sinful was their rejecting of Him and His word. They had chosen to ignore His word and His settlement plan in the land of promise, and thus they were held accountable for their own demise (See comments Hs 4:6). God will allow us to walk on the path of our unwise choices, but in the end He will allow us also to reap the consequences of our unwise choices.

Chapter 6

SOLOMON ADDRESSES THE PEOPLE

6:1-11 (1 Kg 8:22-53) ***I have chosen Jerusalem:*** The building of the temple was initially David's choice, but later sanctioned by God. It was an unwise choice that was accommodated by God in order to preserve the last remnant of Israel until they eventually went into captivity. And thus, because of His approval to allow the centralization of the government around one city and a king, God stated that it was His choice. It was not God's original plan to have a king over Israel. But once the people chose to have a king, then the king was God's choice. David was God's choice, and now Solomon was the choice of God. In this case of God's providence to preserve a portion of society for the coming of the Messiah, God allowed the people to make choices which He later approved and used in order to continue with His original choice of people. His approval of man's choices meant that it was His choice, as long as the choice was according to His scheme to use Israel to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. But we must not forget that the wishes of the people were often unwise. We must also not forget that God's scheme was to preserve a portion of world society in order to continue the seedline promise to mankind that was initially made in Genesis 3:15. At one time, Satan's attack against the seedline of woman took all the world into apostasy, except for eight faithful souls who entered Noah's ark. The world always morally digresses, and thus to preserve the seedline promise that was given in Genesis 3:15, and restated to Abraham and his seed in Genesis 12:1-3, God chose one nation of the world that would come from Abraham's seed. At the time in history when Solomon reigned, God knew that the majority of this nation was following the course of moral degradation. Therefore, the centralization of the nation and faith around Jerusalem and the temple was a last resort to maintain Judah as long as possible until the Babylonian captivity.

6:12-21 ***Bronze platform:*** This is the same Hebrew word for scaffold. This was a structure that was located in front of the bronze altar on which Solomon stood in order to address

the people (1 Kg 8:54). ***How much less this house that I have built:*** Contrary to the beliefs of the nations around Israel, Solomon knew that no physical structure on earth would house God who is beyond the definition of our words. The temple, as the tabernacle before it, was only a symbol of the presence of God. ***When they pray toward this place:*** When Mohammed developed the theology of Islam, he took from this context his concept to pray toward Mecca, instead of Jerusalem. As Solomon asked the people to pray toward Jerusalem and the temple, Mohammed asked his people to pray toward Mecca. Mohammed's purpose was to turn the thinking of the Arabs from Jerusalem and Judaism to the place of the origin of Islam. In Solomon's words there was a sense of nationalism that was imposed on the Israelites by these words. We must keep in mind when reading this prayer, that the prayer was from Solomon. Its contents were written by inspiration, though we would assume that the original prayer itself was not inspired. It was as if Solomon himself understood that the construction of the temple marginalized the tribes to the north. He thus invoked loyalty to the place, to Jerusalem and the temple. What actually transpired was that within about five years after his death, and under the leadership of Jeroboam, the northern tribes would pull away from Judah, Jerusalem and the temple. They would then sanction their own capitals and altars for worship. God knew that this would happen, and thus prepared Jeroboam to lead the northern ten tribes, though He did not want the altars of Bethel and Dan to be built. One might question that if God knew that the division of the kingdom would happen as a result of the centralization of kingship, government and faith in Jerusalem, then why did He allow it to happen? The answer is that God will allow us to follow after our own misguided ways in order that we might learn from our past. If Israel would not follow the law of God as He originally intended, then He would take only a remnant of the faithful after the Babylonian captivity in order to bring them to the birth of the Messiah and Savior of the world. We must keep in mind that throughout God's work with Israel, He always focused on the faithful remnant, not the entire nation of the twelve tribes. From a historical sense, and in the foreknowledge of God, the promised land, the nation of twelve tribes, the kings, Jerusalem and the temple, were all for the purpose of producing a faithful remnant of Israel in order to be the background upon which the Savior of the world would be born. Though this theme is not so clear in the histories of the Kings and Chronicles, it is very clear in the prophets who spoke of the faithful remnant that would come back into the promised land after the Babylonian captivity. ***There will not fail you a man in My sight to sit on the throne of Israel:*** God promised David that from his descendants kings would sit on the throne of Israel. Only those of the house of David, therefore, were rightful heirs to be kings in Israel. Within this promise is a prophecy of Jesus who was of the lineage of David and is now sitting on the throne of David (See At 2:30-35). He is sitting on the throne in heaven where the source of authority of the throne of David has always been.

6:22,23 (1 Kg 8:31-46) Contrary to the original law of swearing an oath before witnesses, an oath that would be made before the altar would also bring justice. The swearing of an oath was an act of one bringing himself into compliance with a law that he made for himself. ***In this house:*** If sin by the nation led to defeat before the enemies of Israel, then Solomon asked God to forgive the sin if confession was made in the temple. If some other dire consequence for their sin beset the nation, Solomon asked that the condition for answered prayer be one's presence in the temple. This condition certainly marginalized the tribal groups to the far north. We must keep in mind that the prayer of Solomon was not inspired in its content, only its recording in the Scriptures. We could assume, therefore, that Solomon was placing a condition on Israel for forgiveness that was not placed on the nation by God. At least in the law there was no condition for forgiveness of the people that was based on being "in the house of the Lord" in Jerusalem. God's forgiveness was never based on one being in a specific location, or facing a particular direction at the time of confession. These were new concepts that were introduced by Solomon, which at the time, seemed to be loaded with Judean nationalism, or the influence of the false religions of the nations around Israel. It may have been that even at this time in the life of Solomon he was being influenced by the false theologies of the nations around Judah. At least what he was asking in this prayer of dedication was not a part of the law. Nowhere in the law is one restricted to either a direction or posture in prayer or a specific location in which one must be in order to have one's prayer answered.

6:24-27 ***If ... defeated:*** If the defeat were the punishment of God for some sin, then Solomon asked that repentance be the condition for their victory over their enemies. ***When the heavens are shut up:*** If drought came as a result of sin, then repentance would be necessary for the restoration of rain (See 1 Kg 17:1).

6:28-31 ***If there is famine:*** Eight calamities are given that can come as a result of national sin. God used such calamities in order to turn the people's minds to Him. Since the calamities would come over a period of time, then their repentance had to be manifested over a period of time. A simple prayer of confession would not do. They had to prove their repentance by an obedient life.

6:32,33 The land of Palestine was the central trading route between the countries to the north of Palestine and eastern Africa. There were thus many traders (foreigners) who passed through Palestine. Solomon's prayer was that these foreigners witness the glory of God in Israel, and thus propagate what they experienced throughout the nations where they traded.

6:34,35 The condition for victory is if the people go to war according to the command of God.

6:36-40 ***They carry them away captives:*** Within the teachings of the law there was the consequence of national captivity. Reference was thus to a national apostasy, for the captivity was in reference to the nation of Israel paying the price for their culture of sin. Though individuals commit sin (see Lv 5:1; 1 Sm 2:25), emphasis in this text would be to a culture of sin that would be considered a national apostasy. Captivity as a nation would come only when the culture of the people became sinful against the word of God.

6:41,42 ***Clothed with salvation:*** The conduct of the religious leaders must be according to the righteousness of God. The priests were not only to be dressed properly, but they also were to be clothed in moral behavior. Their presentation was to conform to the will of God.

Chapter 7
GOD ACCEPTS SOLOMON'S OFFERING

7:1-3 ***The glory of the Lord filled the house:*** This was God's signal that He accepted the offering that was made. This event was similar to the revelation of God's glory at Mt. Sinai. On that occasion God signaled the beginning of a new era, which era lasted over 400 years unto the time of this inauguration of the temple. The glorious outpouring of the glory of God on this occasion would be the beginning of another era that would end in captivity.

FEAST OF DEDICATION

7:4-11 (1 Kg 8:62-66) Since there was no specific sin for which sin or trespass offerings were to be given, the offerings during this event centered around the burnt and peace offerings. The peace offerings were made in reference to bringing parties together during a fellowship meal. Since the completion of the temple was an opportunity and occasion to bring the people together, it was the perfect occasion for the fellowship meals that resulted from the offering of animals for the peace offering. ***All Israel:*** Israelites from the far north in Hamath to the river that was the border between Israel and Egypt were present at this dedication. At least during this time in the history of Israel the tribes were united. It would be the last time they would be united to this extent. They would eventually digress to the point of conducting wars against one another.

MESSAGE OF BLESSING & WARNING

7:12-22 (1 Kg 9:1-9) ***If My people:*** God placed conditions on answered prayer. The conditions involved not only change in attitude, but also in action. In order for God to answer their prayers, they were to humble themselves before Him. This meant that they were to be obedient to His will. Therefore, if we would have God answer our prayers, there must be humility and obedience to the word of God. Our sincerity is determined by our humility and our obedience (1 Jn 1:7).

Chapter 8
SOLOMON'S ACHIEVEMENTS

8:1-18 (1 Kg 9:10-28) The content of verses 13-18 is here added to the information that is given in 1 Kings. The information that is given here was to highlight the grandeur of the reign of Solomon, and the economic strength of Israel at this time in Israel's history. No other kingdom of the world at this time in history could surpass the wealth of Israel. Solomon's network of trade and tribute brought a great deal of wealth into the kingdom treasuries. Add to this the fact that the stretch of land that was given to Israel was the trade route between nations to the north of Palestine and all of eastern Africa. Custom taxes of traders also added to the treasury of Solomon. In order to establish the borders of the territory of Israel, and secure the trade routes, Solomon constructed many cities, specifically fortified cities where he stationed his army. The taxation of the Israelite people and traders, with the tribute from subjugated kingdoms, necessitated the building of storage cities for the wealth that came into the coffers of Solomon. ***Forced labor:*** Solomon used the remnant of the Canaanites as slaves for the kingdom of Israel. When employed personnel were needed, the Israelites were used. ***Daughter of Pharaoh:*** Solomon's marriage to an Egyptian, though possibly done for political reasons, was against the law of God. She was moved out of the temple area because she continued to honor the gods of Egypt. Why Solomon did not convert her to the only God before he took her as his wife, we are not told. It seems that Solomon was more interested in an economic alliance with Egypt than the preservation of the faith of Israel. ***According to the order of David:*** Though David was not allowed to build the temple, he went as far in the construction as he could, and yet be obedient to the will of God that excluded him from the actual construction. He provided most of the materials that were to be used in the construction. And, he provided the organization of the priests and Levites in their services with reference to the ceremonies that pertained to the temple. ***Ezion Geber:*** This key city was first mentioned in reference to the wilderness wanderings of Israel (Nm 33:35,36; Dt 2:8). The city was located near Elath on the Red Sea, or Gulf of Aqaba in the land of Edom. During the reign of Solomon, it was developed into a major seaport. ***Knowledge of the sea:*** The people of Hiram's kingdom were very knowledgeable of the sea. The Israelites, however, were a farming culture of people. In the construction of the ships, it was only natural that Hiram's men construct the ships and provide guidance in sailing the seas for Solomon (1 Kg 9:26-28).

Chapter 9
THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

9:1-12 (1 Kg 10:1-25; 11:41-43) The kingdom of Sheba is believed to have been in the area of modern-day Ethiopia. Since archaeological discoveries in reference to Judaism in northern Ethiopia date back to the time of Solomon, no one seriously challenges the claim that Solomon had a great impact on the queen of Sheba. We could assume that when the queen returned from visiting Solomon, she brought with her not only the gifts of Solomon, but also his religious beliefs. The queen was thoroughly impressed with the grandeur of Solomon's kingdom and all that he had accomplished by his skillful administration. We would conclude, therefore, that she returned with all she could in order to influence the future of her own people in a manner that Solomon had influenced the Israelites.

SOLOMON'S SPLENDOR

9:13-28 This context concludes the assessment of the writer concerning the achievements of Solomon. What is interesting are the negative things in reference to Solomon and his kingdom that are not mentioned in the record of the Chronicles, but are mentioned in the Kings. Nothing is said of the apostasy of the nation under the reign of Solomon. Nothing is said

of his failing health, his marriage to many foreign women, his idolatry, severe taxation of the people, the extravagance of his life-style, and the continuing threat of the enemies of Israel. It seems that the writer wanted the initial readers to stay focused in their minds on where Israel was at the time of Solomon, but could never again achieve as a nation. If the writer wanted to impress upon the initial readers' minds the cost of sin, then he certainly conveyed this message by focusing on the grandeur from which Solomon fell, as well as Israel as a whole, because of their desire to run after foreign gods.

SOLOMON'S DEATH

9:29-31 All the wealth that Solomon accumulated throughout his reign was gone within a few years after his death. When Shishak came up from Egypt during the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, he took away the treasures of the temple and royal palace. God did not want the leaders of Israel to accumulate great centralized wealth (See Dt 17:14-20). In the vanity of his life, however, Solomon ignored many of the principles of the law of God. In the latter part of his life, he weakened his own faith in God by catering to the gods of his many wives. The writer wanted to focus on the great institutions that were established by Solomon, and thus placed less emphasis on his moral leadership which eventually led to the downfall of all the institutions that he created. He was a great builder, administrator and king of government. However, he failed in being the type of spiritual leader the people needed. The lesson of Solomon is that one can accomplish great things in the material world, but without moral leadership, leave little to the religious posterity of his people.

The Divided Kingdom
(10:1-19)

Outline: (1) Rehoboam and the people (10:1-5), (2) Division of the kingdom (10:6-19)

Chapter 10
REHOBOAM & THE PEOPLE

This chapter begins the end of Israel as a whole, but specifically Judah. The twelve tribes of Israel were divided into the northern and southern kingdoms, with Rehoboam being the first king of the southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin and Jeroboam leading the northern ten tribes. After a little over 200 years, both kingdoms would from the time of this division, be taken into captivity. The north would go into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. and the south would go into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. What is related to us in the following chapters emphasizes the apostasy of the southern kingdom. What the writer wants us to reap from this chronicle of a kingdom are the reasons why God allowed Israel as a whole to go into captivity. The captivities were a purifying necessity for Israel, and thus the writer portrays the sins of Israel of which they needed to be cleansed. We must keep in mind that God was interested in preserving the Seed of woman (Gn 3:15) through the preservation of the faithful remnant that would emerge from Babylonian captivity.

What delayed the captivity of the southern kingdom were the reformation and restoration actions of four out of the nineteen kings and one queen who ruled over Judah. The reformationists and restorationists, were Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah and Josiah. The actions of these four kings divide the history of Judah into four cycles of sin and repentance. Once reforms were made by one of these great kings, in the years that followed the reformation, or restoration, the people again went into apostasy. In the years following the last king, Josiah, God handed the people over to the Babylonians.

10:1-5 ***Rehoboam*** (1 Kg 12:1-20): Rehoboam was truly an inept leader with little skill in leading the people from 931 to 913 B.C. Shechem: By this time in the history of Israel, the foundation had already been laid for the division of the twelve tribes. The leaders of the northern ten tribes thus came to Shechem for a conference with Rehoboam concerning the future of his reign. They sought relief from the great burden of taxes that was levied from them by Solomon, as well as greater liberty from the centralized government in Jerusalem. The ineptitude of Rehoboam was manifested in his refusal to listen to their pleas, while at the same time listening to the young men with whom he had grown up in the courtyards of the temple and palace. They knew no other life, and thus Rehoboam was typical of a spoiled child who grew up in luxury and had no desire to change his life-style. Under him greater taxes and harsher rule would come.

DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

10:6-19 ***For it was brought about by God:*** We are not told how God providentially worked behind the scenes of history in order to bring about what transpired in the division of Israel. In verse 15 we are told why God allowed the event of the division to happen. It was punishment of the house of David because of the apostasy of Solomon. The ideal was that Israel dwell in the promised land as an agricultural community until the Messiah came into the world. Unfortunately, Israel succumbed to many of the desires of the surrounding nations. God accommodated their desires, but they had to live with the consequences of their foolish choices. ***David, see to your own house:*** If Rehoboam were wise, he could have seen this coming. The northern tribes had already been marginalized by the establishment of central government in Jerusalem. They had been consigned to always being too far away from the temple for the annual sacrifices. Added to this was the fact that King David and his household took up residence in Jerusalem. All these actions on the part of the house of David laid the foundation for what happened in this context. The northern tribes simply had had enough, and thus the appeal to Rehoboam was a last effort on the part of the northern tribes to maintain a united Israel.

From Rehoboam To The Captivity
(11:1 – 36:21)

Outline: (1) Reign of Rehoboam (11:1 – 12:16), (2) Reign of Abijah (Abijam) (13:1-22), (3) Reign of Asa (14:1 – 16:14), (4) Reign of Jehoshaphat (17:1– 21:3), (5) Reign of Jehoram (21:4-20), (6) Reign of Ahaziah (Jehoahaz) (22:1-9), (7) Reign of Athaliah (22:10 – 23:21), (8) Reign of Joash (Jehoash) (24:1-27), (9) Reign of

Amaziah (25:1-28), (10) Reign of Uzziah (Azariah) (26:1-23), (11) Reign of Jotham (27:1-9), (12) Reign of Ahaz (28:1-27), (13) Reign of Hezekiah (29:1 – 32:33), (14) Reign of Manasseh (33:1-20), (15) Reign of Amon (33:21-25), (16) Reign of Josiah (34:1 – 35:27), (17) Reign of Jehoahaz (Joahaz or Shallum) (36:1-4), (18) Reign of Jehoiakim (Eliakim) (36:5-8), (19) Reign of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah or Coniah) (36:9,10), (20) Reign of Zedekiah (Mattaniah) (36:11-21), (21) Decree of Cyrus of Persia (36:22,23)

Chapter 11
REIGN OF REHOBOAM

11:1-4 (1 Kg 12:21-24) ***Might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam:*** Rehoboam was probably thinking that he had a right to reign over all Israel because he was of the lineage of David, through Solomon, to whom promise was made that God would continually set one of David's seed on his throne. This belief was true, but he did not know what God knew about the future. God knew that the northern tribes would go into apostasy, and subsequently into captivity. Though God did not explain this, He did say to the south to let their northern brothers go their way. Also, we must not discount the fact that Rehoboam's desire to go to war with the north was simply a matter of economics. He wanted the taxes that came from the northern tribes. ***This thing is from Me:*** This message from God through Shemaiah prevented a civil war. Rehoboam was losing a great deal of tax money, and thus was willing to create a war with the northern tribes in order to secure his kingdom and the taxes. What he was about to do manifested not only his selfishness, but also his total lack of concern for his northern brothers. Even though they divided over this issue, throughout the remainder of the history of the divided kingdom there would be continual strife between the two kingdoms (See 12:15).

11:5-12 ***Cities for the defense of Judah:*** Now that the kingdom was divided, Judah was vulnerable. Rehoboam thus built or fortified fifteen key cities to protect all trading routes, as well as to establish defensive measures against the northern kingdom. What he did not understand was that the threat would not come from his northern brothers, but from the southwest, from Egypt.

11:13-17 ***The Levites ... came to Judah:*** The centralization of the sacrifices around Jerusalem consigned the northern tribes to be always too far away from the place to which they were to go every year for the annual sacrifices. The tabernacle was originally meant to be moved among the tribal territories, and thus not consigned to any one or two tribes. This would have prevented any tribe from continually being too far away from the tabernacle for the annual sacrifices. When the kingdom divided, Jeroboam built places for sacrifices in Bethel and Dan, thus keeping the people from going to the temple in Jerusalem. This move did not go well with the priests and Levites, and thus, they forsook the apostasy of Jeroboam. Jeroboam subsequently established his own paid priesthood (1 Kg 12:31; 13:33). There were plenty of people who were looking for a salary to be full-time priests, and thus he had no problem in finding false priests to administer the sacrifices at Bethel and Dan. ***Excluded them from serving as priests:*** Those who seek to do the will of God will always be excluded by those who are hirelings. They will be excluded by those against whom they speak the truth. They will be excluded by those as Jeroboam and his sons who seek to maintain control. ***All the tribes of Israel:*** This is a reference to all twelve tribes. A remnant of all twelve tribes took up residence in the territory of Judah. This is significant in reference to the Babylonian captivity that would occur in 586 B.C. In this captivity a remnant of all twelve tribes was taken to Babylon. ***Strong for three years:*** Rehoboam was made strong until Shishak came from Egypt, defeated him, and then took all of the treasures of the temple and royal house back to Egypt (ch 12). ***The way of David and Solomon:*** With the "way of David" there would be no problem in discerning their faithfulness during these three years. However, the "way of Solomon" must have reference to his first years of reign, for in the last years of his reign he went after the gods of the many wives he had married.

11:18-23 Rehoboam did follow after the marital ways of his father for he had 18 wives and 60 concubines, who together gave him 28 sons and 60 daughters. He chose Abijah to be his successor. Abijah was the son of Maachah who was the daughter of Absalom. As a political move, he stationed his children throughout the fortified cities of Judah. By doing this he guaranteed the loyalty of the cities, and thus prevented possible rebellion from any part of Judah.

Chapter 12

12:1-16 (1 Kg 14:25-28) ***Shishak ... took away the treasures of the house of the Lord:*** Pharaoh Sheshonk I is probably the Shishak that is mentioned in this text. He provided refuge for Jeroboam when he fled from Solomon (1 Kg 11:40). However, after the kingdom of Israel was divided, Jeroboam possibly fell out of favor with the Egyptian Pharaoh. Whatever the case, he went to seize control of the northern ten tribes of Israel, for God had promised that he would reign over them. The invasion of Egypt that is in this context took place within five years after the kingdom of Israel was divided. On a temple wall in Karnak, Egypt there has been discovered reliefs (pictorial writing) where Shishak described his campaign into Judah and Israel, the northern kingdom. He mentioned those cities that he conquered in Palestine, most of which were in the northern kingdom where Jeroboam reigned. Also in the information of the reliefs is a statement referring to the "highlands of David," thus confirming the existence of David as a major figure in the history of Palestine before Pharaoh's arrival. Among the cities that are mentioned in the reliefs, Shishak claimed to have taken Megiddo. A stele (monument) has also been found in Megiddo that dates to the time of this attack, which stele mentions Sheshonk, the king of Egypt. The destruction of many other cities in Palestine date to the time of this invasion. It was at this time that Shishak took back to Egypt Solomon's treasures of the temple and the royal house. When Osorkon I, the son of Sheshonk (Shishak), came to the throne of Egypt, he donated great amounts of silver and gold to the temples of Egypt. It is believed that much of this silver and gold came from his father's raids into Palestine during the early part of the reign of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The irony

of the story is that after David and Solomon had amassed a great amount of silver and gold, it was all taken by Shishak within five years of the death of Solomon. All the burden of Solomon's taxation of the people ended up in Egypt in the temples of pagan gods.

Chapter 13
REIGN OF ABIJAH

13:1-22 (1 Kg 15:1-8) ***Abijah:*** Or, Abijam, a variant spelling of the same name. He reigned from 913 to 911 B.C. Abijah antagonized the northern kingdom to the point that war broke out between the two kingdoms within three years of the beginning of his reign. He assumed that in order to fulfill the promise that was made by God to the house of David, he had to forcefully bring the northern tribes again under the command of Jerusalem. ***The kingdom over Israel to David forever:*** Abijah assumed that he was the rightful king to reign over all twelve tribes because of God's promise to David. ***Covenant of salt:*** The covenant was a perpetual covenant between God and Israel (See Lv 2:13). Abijah assumed that because of the division of Israel, the tribes of the north no longer honored the covenant. His accusation against the north was that they rejected the covenant and hired for priests those who were not Levites. Since Jeroboam had taken the northern tribes further away from God than God originally intended by giving him kingship over the north, He fought for Abijah. The result of the war was a massive death of 500,000 Israelites. The defeat was so massive that the north under the rule of Jeroboam was never able to regain military strength (1 Kg 14:20; 15:9). ***Rebelled against his lord:*** Jeroboam rebelled against the house of David because God had given him the right to reign over the northern ten tribes. ***Whoever comes:*** If anyone came with a bull and seven rams, he could be a priest. In other words, Jeroboam was selling the office of a priest. ***You will not prosper:*** Abijah's message was against the northern tribes who had gone too far from the will of God. Though God had given the ten northern tribes to Jeroboam, Jeroboam took them into idol worship. ***God smote Jeroboam:*** Through the proxy of the army of Judah, God judged the north for following after the sins of Jeroboam.

Chapter 14
REIGN OF ASA

14:1-15 (1 Kg 15:9,10) ***Asa:*** Asa reigned from 911 to 870 B.C. In the first part of his reign he had peace for ten years as a result of the total defeat of the northern kingdom by Abijah. Asa was a reformer, but not as some of the reformers who followed him. ***Took away ... the high places:*** This statement in verse 3 is at the beginning of Asa's reign, whereas the one in 15:17 is in reference to the last of his forty-one year reign. It seems that the reforms that he made at the beginning of his reign were not effective in ridding Judah of all the places of worship where people went to pay homage to false gods. ***So they built and prospered:*** The first of Asa's reign was a time of great prosperity in Judah. Because they were in a time of peace, they could focus on economic development. It could have been that their development led them to be a prey for a people as the Ethiopians who had come with a great army that needed the support of spoils they would take from conquered nations. ***Zerah the Ethiopian:*** There was a truth reaffirmed in Judah's victory over the massive army of Zerah. That truth was in God's promise to Israel that if they remained faithful, each Israelite soldier would be able to stand against many soldiers of the enemy. Judah's battle with the Ethiopians was probably the greatest battle of all battles that Israel fought throughout her history. The battle of 580,000 men against one million would certainly have resulted in a great carnage of humanity. But at least one point was emphasized. Any nation that would oppose Judah should think twice before engaging God's people in war when they had gone to God, as Asa, in repentant prayer.

Chapter 15

15:1-7 (1 Kg 15:11-15) Asa was a reformer. He recognized that Judah was in trouble in that the nation had reaped the consequences of their desire for allegiance to gods that they thought would bring them profit as a nation. He also recognized that God required obedience to His will in order that the blessings from God be unleashed on Judah. When Asa set out to reform Judah, he was promised by God that his efforts would not go without reward. ***While you are with Him:*** God was on Asa's side only when Asa had committed himself to God. God is not with an apostate. ***Without a teaching priest:*** When they ceased teaching the word of God, they encountered trouble from God.

15:8-15 ***Oded the prophet:*** The name of the father of Azariah is used instead of Azariah. The meaning could be that Asa carried out this prophecy that was earlier stated by Oded, but repeated by his son, Azariah. ***They defected to him out of Israel in great numbers:*** This was another great defection from the north to Judah. The significance of this defection is that when the northern kingdom fell in 722/21 B.C., a remnant of the northern ten tribes was dwelling in Judah at the time. Those of these tribes possibly continued in Judah, and thus were also taken into captivity in 586 B.C. when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. When the return from captivity came in 536 B.C., a remnant of all twelve tribes in the Babylonian captivity thus returned to Palestine in order to receive the Messiah that was promised to the seed of Abraham. ***Should be put to death:*** This was a threat (See Ex 22:20; Dt 13:6-17; 17:2-7). They entered into a covenant to reform Judah. Those who would not join the reformation were threatened with death because they would be seen as obstacles to the reforms.

15:16-19 ***Maachah ... he removed:*** Asa's reformation began at home. His own mother had to be taken from her leadership role in order to give an example to everyone that he was serious about his reforms. ***The high places:*** The people had become so attached to these places of worship that they refused to sacrifice them for the sake of reformation. Throughout the history of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel the high places were rarely destroyed in any reformation. The reason for this was that people become accustomed to places of worship. Going to a place of worship means that they leave a place where they are usually not worshiping. Instead of worshiping daily wherever one is, it is easy to think that one can

escape God when he leaves the place that he has designated as a high place of worship. Jesus taught that there would never be any location that was designated for worship among His disciples (See comments Jn 4:20-24). ***Idol in a grove:*** The syncretism of religious beliefs was common throughout the history of Israel and Judah. Syncretism in faith is the simultaneous worship of different gods. The Israelites continued to worship the God of heaven, but as Solomon, they brought into their pantheism of worship the gods of the nations around them. The Asherah, or Ashteroth, was associated with this syncretism of worship. The Asherah was probably a grove of trees or wooden idols that were erected in special places of worship, specifically in high places. Gideon (Jg 6:25-28), Asa (2 Ch 15:16), Hezekiah (2 Ch 31:1) and Josiah (2 Ch 34:3-7) destroyed these wooden images during their restorations. Archaeological discoveries have revealed that in the syncretism of Israel, it was believed that the wooden images or idols of the Asherah protected the individual from harm. The wooden idols were thus considered fetishes that were revered objects because of their protection for the one who honored the god or spirit they represented. ***Thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign:*** There is a variant reading in this text in reference to the reading in 1 Kings. Most commentators, however, believe that the reading here is to be preferred.

Chapter 16

16:1-10 (1 Kg 15:16-24) ***Built Ramah:*** Baasha sought to build Ramah as a fortified city in order to establish a blockage against Asa. He wanted to stop the supply route of trade to Jerusalem. ***Asa ... sent to Ben-hadad:*** It seems that Asa faltered in his faith in God in reference to the Syrians. He had trusted in God when threatened by the massive force that came up from the Ethiopians. With his 580,000 men he was able to defeat an army of one million. But in reference to the threat that came from Baasha, the king of Israel, it seems that he lost his faith in God's help and trusted instead in his wealth to buy help from the Syrians. Because he did not trust in God, Hanani, the prophet, delivered the word of God to him that he would have wars the rest of his life. God looks for those who will trust wholeheartedly in His help. We do not know exactly why Asa stumbled in faith with a lesser threat than the Ethiopians. We do know that God considered his purchase of Syrian help with the treasures of the house of God to be foolish. His heart, therefore, was not loyal to God. ***Put him in a prison house:*** When the people do not want to hear the truth, they will retaliate against those who bring the message of God to their ears (See comments Hb 11:32-40).

16:11-14 He did not seek the Lord: It was not wrong to seek the physicians. However, when healing power was available from God, he should have sought God's healing before consulting the physicians. This statement was made in order to manifest the fact that Asa had in his latter years turned from the zeal that he had for the Lord in his early days when he led a reformation in Judah. Nevertheless, the good of his reign was greater than his shortcomings. When he died, great honor was given to him. ***Great burning:*** This was the burning of many fragrant spices in honor of the king.

Chapter 17
REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT

17:1-6 (1 Kg 22:41-50) Since he reigned from 870 to 848 B.C., it seems that during most of this time Jehoshaphat reigned coregently with his father, Asa. Since he built on the limited reforms of his father, he may have been one of the first successful reformationists in Judah. Since he walked in the ways of David, we would assume that he sought the Lord with all his heart in order to bring Judah back to the authority of the will of God in their lives. ***Took delight in the ways of the Lord:*** He made it his desire to live according to the word of God. The worship places of Bethel and Dan in the northern kingdom were obstacles that continually led the people away from God. But in the south, Jehoshaphat sought to bring the people into conformity with what God instituted for His people.

17:7-9 ***Teach in the cities:*** In order to accomplish the type of reformation that is explained in this context, the first step was to send forth teachers to the cities throughout a particular region. In this case, teachers were sent throughout Judah. The usual manner by which the people were taught in the past in Israel was that the people brought their offerings and came to the Levites to receive instruction. But the people had stopped coming to the teachers of the word of God. So in order to initiate a reformation, a system of sending the teachers to the people had to be initiated. Therefore, this was the first time when the Levites and priests were sent in groups to the people. Apostasy can always be identified by the refusal of the people to go to the teachers of the word of God. ***The book of the law of the Lord:*** If reformation is to become a restoration to God's will, then the Bible must be the source of the teacher's information. These Levites and priests did not go forth to teach subjects that were parallel to the word of God. They taught the law of God. Only when men submit to the word of God can true reformation occur (See 2 Kg 23:2; Ne 8:3-8). Since the Levites went to different places to teach, then we can correctly assume that each group of teachers had their own copy of the first five books of the law (Genesis–Deuteronomy). We must also assume that throughout the history of Israel copies of the law were continually made by the scribes.

17:10-19 In order to secure peace in the kingdom, Jehoshaphat had a large army of men. In times of peace reformations can occur because conflicts do not hinder the work of the teachers of God's word. In times of war, the faith of believers may increase, but it is difficult for the teachers of the word of God to do their work. It is in times of peace when evangelism is more successful.

Chapter 18

18:1-3 (1 Kg 22:1-38) ***Allied himself by marriage:*** It was the right objective to unite the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. But the way he sought unity, in this case, was wrong. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was given in marriage to Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat. Unfortunately, the evil influence of Ahab and Jezebel came into the life of Jehoram, and thus when he came to the throne, wickedness once again came into the royal family of Judah.

18:4-11 (1 Kg 22:4-39) ***Four hundred men of the prophets:*** Since these prophets were on the payroll of the government of Ahab, then we would expect them to make pronouncements that were politically correct. However, since their pronouncements depended on their pay, we would question what they said. The hirelings usually never speak against the wishes of those who sign their paychecks. For this reason, Jehoshaphat was skeptical of the pronouncements of the hired preachers of Ahab. He wanted a second opinion. He did not consider Ahab's paid prophets to be prophets of God, for he asked for a true prophet of God. ***Micaiah:*** A true man of God will speak that which is true, regardless of his source of support. And since Ahab was living in wickedness, the prophet of God in this case could speak only that which was contrary to the wicked wishes of Ahab.

18:12-27 ***Speak good:*** Four hundred paid preachers had preached a united message. The messenger that was sent to Micaiah wanted to intimidate him into conforming to the opinion of the 400. Brave men speak what is right, regardless of the number of those who speak error. ***What God says:*** If one would presume to be a spokesman for God, then he has no option but to speak the word of God. ***Go up and prosper, and they will be delivered into your hand:*** These words of Micaiah must be understood as an irony. The truth was that the united army of Israel would be defeated in the battle and that Ahab would be killed. ***Put this fellow in prison:*** Those who would commit themselves to preaching the truth must resign themselves to the same fate as Micaiah (See At 14:22; 2 Tm 2:8-13; 1 Pt 4:16). If one would speak the truth, he will be sought after by those who seek the truth, but rejected by those who want to continue in their own deception. ***These have no master:*** This was a prophecy of the death of Ahab.

18:28-34 ***God moved them to depart from him:*** In the heat of the battle, and when there was a special effort by the soldiers to go after one they thought was Ahab, the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord. Here is a case where God directly moved those who were pursuing Jehoshaphat to turn away from him. Jehoshaphat's prayer was answered immediately and in a direct manner.

Chapter 19

19:1-3 ***Should you help the ungodly:*** The alliance that Jehoshaphat made with Ahab was an alliance with the ungodly. His goal was honorable, that is to bring unity between the two kingdoms. However, Ahab was wicked, and with wicked people one should never be unequally yoked. In this case, the alliance actually did much to undo all the good that Jehoshaphat did in his work of reforming Judah. He brought into the leadership of Judah evil influences through Athaliah who married his son.

19:4-11 ***Judge ... for the Lord:*** In using the word of God as the standard for judgment, they were judging for the Lord (Dt 16:6-10,18-20; see comments Jn 14:28). In order to judge for the Lord according to the standard of the word of God, the judgment must be without respect of persons. If bribes are taken, then the judgments are twisted. In order that civil matters not interfere with religious matters, Amariah was given charge over judgments in reference to religious matters. Zebadiah was given authority over the king's administration. In this way, there was a separation between the matters of faith and state. The wisdom of this arrangement was based on the fact that the state should never be given the authority to determine moral law. It is the work of God through His word to determine moral law, not man through the authority and power of the state.

Chapter 20

20:1-4 This was the first threat of the Moabites and Ammonites since the reign of David (2 Sm 8:2; 12:26-30).

20:5-13 ***New court:*** This was probably the outer court of the temple that had been rebuilt. ***Are You not our God who drove out the inhabitants:*** In this prayer Jehoshaphat recalled the work of God who drove out the Canaanites of the land by the Israelites (See 6:28-31). Not knowing what to do, he reaffirmed his loyalty to God in order to deal with the impending threat of the Moabites and Ammonites. Jehoshaphat's complaint was that God did not allow Israel to destroy them when they first came out of Egypt. But now, he complained, the Moabites and Ammonites were trying to cast Israel out of the land that God promised to Israel. It seems that this threat was one of national destruction since all the families were gathered together to plead with the Lord for His help.

20:14-19 ***Do not be afraid:*** The people were afraid. The threat did not come upon them because of their own aggression against Moab and Ammon. It was the intent of the Moabites and Ammonites to expel Judah from the land. ***The battle is not yours, but God's:*** Essentially, the prophet was saying that God would take care of this matter. God's people must at all times pray. However, they must also take action. But this would not be the case in this situation. God would defeat the Moabites and Ammonites apart from the efforts of His people.

20:20-23 The Levites led the people into what they thought would be a battle of direct confrontation with the Moabites and Ammonites. But an armed conflict was not to be. Instead, in some way God moved the Moabites and Ammonites to turn on one another. Their internal strife with one another was so intense that they destroyed one another. Their alliance with one another to destroy a common enemy in order to possess their land ended in their destruction of one another.

20:24-30 There was so much spoil to be taken from the dead of the Moabites and Ammonites, that it took three days to take it from the battlefield. When word was circulated concerning this event, the other nations left Judah in peace.

20:31-37 ***The high places:*** Throughout the history of Israel these locations of worship continued to plague any reformation or restoration efforts by those who sought to serve the Lord. It seems that the attachment of the people to these places where the faith of Israel was syncretized with the gods of the Canaanites was too strong for the reforming kings. Since the northern kingdom by the time of Jehoshaphat had digressed toward idol worship more than Judah, it was a very unwise move on the part of Jehoshaphat to align himself with Ahaziah, the king of Israel. God's punishment of Jehoshaphat for this alliance was the destruction of the ships that he had built to go to Tarshish, a city somewhere in Spain.

21:1-3 The death of Jehoshaphat concluded the first cycle of Judah's history that ended with his reformation and death. Throughout this time Judah enjoyed a relative time of peace. At least, Judah was not invaded by foreign nations, and thus enjoyed a time of freedom from threats. The sons of Jehoshaphat were stationed at strategic cities throughout Judah and were supported by the centralized government in Jerusalem. As a nation, therefore, this cycle of history of Judah ended with a well organized government that was set up by Jehoshaphat. But when the firstborn of Jehoshaphat assumed the kingship of Judah, things changed.

Chapter 21
REIGN OF JEHORAM

21:4-7 (2 Kg 8:16-24) ***He slew all his brothers:*** Jehoram established the nature of his kingship by revealing his paranoia. Though he had served five years of coregent reign with his father (2 Kg 8:16), he did not want any competition for the throne that might arise from his brothers. Unfortunately, he had been influenced by his wife, Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. He subsequently worshiped the gods of the nations and was an idolatrous king. However, for the sake of David, God did not destroy the lineage of David from being kings in Judah. For this reason God allowed Jehoram to reign.

21:8-11 When Jehoram killed his brothers who were over the key fortified cities of Judah, he left Judah vulnerable to attack. Edom and Libnah took advantage of the situation, and thus launched their attack in order to gain their freedom from the subjugation of Judah. Judah did win the battle of this revolt, but Edom and Libnah remained in a state of revolt against Judah to the day the writer wrote these statements in the book of Chronicles. ***He made high places:*** This may have been a political move in order to gain the favor of the people. Since people yearn to have a location to which they can go for worship, Jehoram accommodated their desires, and thus built the high places that his father had previously destroyed. ***Play the harlot:*** They committed spiritual adultery by selling themselves to worship of idol gods (Compare comments Js 4:4).

21:12-15 Elijah had been taken up in a whirlwind to God before the reign of Jehoram (2 Kg 2:1). It seems that Elijah had prophesied concerning the wickedness of Jehoram, even before the reign of Jehoram. Elijah had prophesied against Ahab and Jezebel, the parents of Jehoram's wife, Athaliah. In order to unite the kingdoms of Israel, Jehoram married Athaliah, but in doing so brought an evil culture into the family of David in Judah. The result of the prophecy was that Jehoram was stricken with a disease in his intestines and Judah suffered from a great plague.

21:16,17 Though previously subjugated during the reign of Jehoshaphat, the Philistines and Arabians, as the Edomites and Libnahites, also took advantage of the weakened state of Judah. They subsequently plundered the treasury of Judah. They killed all the heritage of David except for one son, the youngest, Jehoahaz, who was also called Ahaziah (25:23). Through this one son the seedline promise of the Messiah that God made to David would continue.

21:18-20 When Jehoram died, there was little sympathy for him, for there was no burning of incense for him. Because there was little respect for him as a person and king, he was not given the honor of being buried in the tombs of the kings of Judah.

Chapter 22
REIGN OF AHAZIAH

22:1-6 (2 Kg 8:25-29; 9:21-28) ***The inhabitants of Jerusalem:*** It must be noted that Judah, as Israel to the north, had digressed from God-anointed kings, to kings that were by this time anointed by the people. During the final years of the kingdoms, they had kings who were appointed by foreign nations. Ahaziah reigned one year in 841 B.C. Since his father was 40 when he died, it is believed that the account of 2 Kings 8 has the correct reading of 22 years old (2 Kg 8:26). ***Forty-two:*** This number may refer to the year of the kingdom of his mother's house. ***His mother was his counselor to do wickedly:*** This is a sad commentary of what a parent would teach her child. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was not only an evil influence on her husband, Jehoram, but also on their son, Ahaziah. The legacy of the evil of Ahab had continued to this third generation. ***Daughter of Omri:*** Since Omri was the father of Ahab, those descendants who lived after him were often called after his name instead of the immediate fathers. Athaliah was the immediate daughter of Ahab, who was the son of Omri. Thus as a descendant of Omri, she was the daughter of Omri. ***Jehoram the son of Ahab:*** This Jehoram should not be confused with the Jehoram of Judah who had just died. ***Joram:*** Or, Jehoram (2 Kg 8:28). ***War against Hazel king of Syria:*** Ahaziah followed the counsel of Athaliah to join the northern kingdom in their war against Syria. But the battle went against the coalition of Israelite kings. Jehoram, the king of the northern kingdom, was severely wounded in the battle. ***Ahaziah:*** Some manuscripts read, "Azariah."

22:7-9 God used Ahaziah's going to the wounded Jehoram (Joram) as a means to bring down his own kingship. Jehu was the new king of Israel whose mission it was to completely eradicate the house of Ahab (Compare Hs 1:3-5). When Jehu came to Jezreel, he killed the house of Ahab, and finding Ahaziah, he killed him also.

REIGN OF ATHALIAH

22:10-12 (2 Kg 11:1-3) In order to be the sole ruler of Judah, Athaliah sought to kill all the royal family of David, whom she supposed would take the throne after the death of Ahaziah. She reigned from 841 to 835 B.C. Her scheme to secure the throne was foiled by Jehoshabeath (Jehosheba - 2 Kg 11:2), ***Ahaziah's son:*** Jehoshabeath hid Ahaziah's son, Joash, her nephew, for six years in the temple. It was during this six years that Athaliah reigned as queen of Judah, not knowing that Joash lived in secret in the temple not far from where she resided.

Chapter 23

23:1-7 (2 Kg 11:4-16) This chapter records the end of the wicked reign of Athaliah. Seventh year: This was the seventh year of Joash's concealment in the temple. In order to bring

Joash to the throne, Jehoiada made and executed a plan to rid the kingdom of Athaliah, as well as reveal to the people the survival and arrival of the young Joash to the throne of Judah. ***Took into covenant with himself:*** At this time, Jehoiada made two covenants. The first was a covenant with those who would execute the plan to take the throne for Joash. The covenant involved them making a commitment to be loyal to the new king. The second covenant included all those of the first covenant, and thus the covenant promise was by all to be loyal to Joash as the king.

23:8-15 It was the theme of the writer of Chronicles to reestablish the leading role of the Levites. He thus writes here that the Levites took a leading role in the scheme to dethrone Athaliah. Because of her idolatry, they saw the enthronement of Joash as a restoration to the one true and living God of Israel. ***Long live the king:*** See 1 Sm 10:24; 2 Sm 16:16. ***Treason, treason:*** The plot to overthrow Athaliah was totally unknown to her. Once she saw that the people had hailed Joash as the new king, she immediately realized that it was her end. Jehoiada commanded her execution outside the temple, which command the Levites immediately carried out.

23:16-21 (2 Kg 11:4-20) ***Jehoiada made a covenant:*** This was the third covenant agreement that was made by Jehoiada in reference to the reformation. This covenant was between himself, the people, and the new king. ***They should be the Lord's people:*** The first two covenants in verses 1-7 were to the restoration of the kingdom and to the king himself. This covenant was a commitment to God. No better covenant could have been made in reference to the commitment of the people to restore themselves to God. In order to execute a social paradigm shift, the people as a whole must make a covenant between themselves and God to do all that is necessary in order to be God's people. In this case it involved the execution of a tyrannical queen and a cleansing of the nation of all that kept people away from focusing on God. In order to do this, the people had to slay the leader of the apostate religion and tear down all that symbolized the religion. What took place at this time, therefore, was not simply a reforming of the existing structures of religion, but the restoration of what God commanded in the law. In order to initiate restorations in Israel, extreme measures were necessary in order to guarantee that changes be made.

Chapter 24
REIGN OF JOASH

24:1-3 (2 Kg 12:1-16) Jehoiada continued to tutor the seven-year-old king as he assumed the throne of Judah. Joash reigned from 841 to 835 B.C. However, it seems that he followed the instructions of Jehoiada only as long as Jehoiada lived, for after his death the leaders of Judah led Joash back into idolatry. ***Two wives:*** Contrary to God's principle of one wife for one man, even Jehoiada was not without flaw in his life as a religious leader.

24:4-16 ***Repair the house of the Lord:*** It was the responsibility of the Levites to collect the temple tax in order to maintain the house of God. This tax was originally designated for the purpose of repairing the tabernacle, but in this case it was used to repair the temple (Ex 30:12-16; Nm 1:50). It seems that the Levites were negligent in keeping the temple in repair because of oppressing kings of the past. It thus took a command from the king to stir them into action. ***Chest:*** This was a collection box that was placed in a location where it could be easily accessed by the people. Once the people realized that the restoration of themselves to God required financial sacrifice on their part, a great contribution was raised for the purpose of restoring the temple. ***Hired masons:*** No one was expected to work for free. In order that everyone share in the reconstruction, some contributed and some worked with their hands. ***Brought the rest of the treasure:*** No one put his hand into the collection in order to steal from the excess funds. Accountability was guaranteed by the honest hearts of those who had responsibility of the contribution. What was leftover was returned to the king and Jehoiada. ***130 years old:*** We must assume that God gave a long life to Jehoiada in order to lead in the restoration of the kingdom of Judah. Though we do not know his exact age when he concealed Joash in the temple, and then executed the plan to restore the priesthood of the Levites with the termination of Athaliah, we would assume that he was over one hundred years old at the time. One is never too old to carry out the work of God. There is no such thing as retirement when speaking of one's ministry for God.

24:17-22 (2 Kg 12:20,21) The information of this section is not in 2 Kings. This information is given because Chronicles focuses on a restoration of the Levitical priesthood after the Babylonian captivity. What is revealed in these events was a coalition of false teachers who remained in the background as the restoration took place when Jehoiada was still alive. These false teachers lurked, as false teachers do, in obscurity until they had an opportunity to influence the king to move toward their views and support. ***But they left the house of the Lord:*** Regardless of how much contribution and effort that went into the repair of the temple, people were more loyal to idolatry. The temple was in Jerusalem, but the people found it more convenient to worship their idols in the country where they worked and lived. ***They would not listen:*** We must not be naive concerning the motives of those who turned the heart of Joash. It was more than simply changing religious beliefs. Those who influenced him toward idolatry had lost their jobs during the restoration from the worship of Baal to the worship of God. Baal, and all his idols were destroyed when Jehoiada was alive. Temple worship in the city was restored and all those who were aligned with Baal were dismissed. They lost their financial support. By killing only Mattan the priest of Baal (23:17), we would assume that a great deal of other Baal prophets also lost their jobs, but not their lives. Joash thus became a pawn who was controlled by those who wanted to go back into the financial scheme of things that existed under Baal idolatry. The restoration of Jehoiada was in the city, but not in the rural farms where the majority of the people lived. ***Zechariah:*** Joash considered Jehoiada a father. Therefore, he probably knew Zechariah as a friend for most of his life. And yet, the persuasion of the idolatrous leaders was so strong that he had his childhood friend Zechariah stoned. We must never underestimate the extent to which one will go in apostasy.

When money is involved, the apostate would rather murder a friend in the name of religion than lose his support.

24:23-27 God's proxy judgment of Judah were the Syrians. With half the number of soldiers, Judah was able to be victorious over an army of one million Ethiopians that came against her during the reign of Asa (14:1-12). But now in sin, the Syrians with a small army were able to defeat the greater army of Judah. The sign was clear. God empowered the army of Syria to punish Judah for her sin of apostasy. The tragedy of the event is in the fact that not all Judah went along with the apostasy of Joash. Nevertheless, faithful soldiers died in the battle with Syria because of the idolatrous practices of Joash. ***His own servants conspired:*** It seems that even in the king's court there were those who were disgusted with the person and reign of Joash. They killed Joash because he had killed some of their friends who were the sons of Jehoiada. They inflicted on him a mortal wound, and then left him to suffer until he died. Because the people had no respect for him, he was not given the honor of being buried in the tombs of the kings of Judah.

Chapter 25
REIGN OF AMAZIAH

25:1-4 (2 Kg 14:1-6) Amaziah followed in the footsteps of his father. He reigned from 796 to 767 B.C. He killed those who had killed his father (See Dt 24:16). His reign was also marred with idolatry, and thus he opposed the true prophets of God.

25:5-13 In order to establish his kingdom, and defeat the Edomites, he mustered an army of men from Judah. But he also hired mercenaries from the apostate tribes of the northern kingdom. He was warned not to do this, because in doing such he would be bringing the idolatrous northern mercenaries into contact with those of Judah. If he did not heed the warning, he would have to reap the punishment of God. So Amaziah gave heed to this warning from the prophet of God. He then sent the mercenaries home. As a result of his obedience, he was able to defeat the Edomites. But because they were angered for their dismissal, the northern mercenaries on their return home plundered the cities of Judah. Amaziah had listened to the prophet of God, but he had to pay for his sin of hiring the mercenaries in the first place. ***The Lord is able:*** God was able to do for Judah what money could not buy.

25:17-24 ***See one another in the face:*** This was a challenge to war. Amaziah could not resist the temptation to secure loyalty by honoring the gods of those who resisted him. He thus burned incense to the gods of the Edomites (See 1 Sm 5:1,2). Amaziah wanted to punish the mercenaries for their action of plundering the cities of Judah. He thus summoned Joash of Israel to battle. But the conflict went bad for Amaziah. Joash defeated his army, took Amaziah captive, and in order to lessen the chance of any future aggression on the part of Judah, he tore down part of the wall of Jerusalem. He then plundered the riches of the temple treasury.

25:25-28 ***He fled to Lachish:*** The tyranny of a bad king was manifested in the fact that Amaziah had to flee from those over whom he had been king. He was later killed in Lachish.

Chapter 26
REIGN OF UZZIAH

26:1-5 (2 Kg 14:21,22; 15:1-7) In 2 Kings his name is Azariah. Uzziah reigned from 767 to 740 B.C. He was only sixteen when he began his reign and was the second longest reigning king of Judah. While his father, Amaziah, was in exile in Lachish, he began his reformation in Judah. Uzziah reigned in Judah during one of the most prosperous times of Israelite history, a time when the tribes had peace between themselves and surrounding nations. It was during this time that the rich prospered. And according to the prophets, it was a time when the poorer became more oppressed. Building projects were the highlight of Uzziah's reign. His success as a king was attributed to his desire to follow the will of God by listening to Zechariah, the prophet. Uzziah's name appears in two nonbiblical sources that have been discovered by archaeologists. Jeroboam II of the northern kingdom reigned at the same time as Uzziah. The name of Jeroboam, king of Israel, appears in the Shema Seal that was excavated at Megiddo.

26:6-15 The military accomplishments of Uzziah were formidable. He subjugated the Philistines, Arabians, Menunims (Maonites) and Ammonites. In order to secure the territory of Judah, he built watchtowers both in Jerusalem and in the areas from where invading armies might come. The extent of his military campaigns secured territory to as far as Israel's border with Egypt.

26:16-23 Uzziah's downfall was that he became arrogant as the result of his many accomplishments. He became so arrogant that he usurped the authority and ministry of the Levitical priests in reference to their officiating in the temple. When a civilian leader assumes the position of the priests, then he is seeking to be a god among men. Uzziah stood against eighty priests who tried to stop him from doing that which did not pertain to anyone other than the priests. The result of his arrogance was immediate punishment by the Lord. He became leprous while standing in the temple with a censer in his hand. The result was that he was forcibly cast out of the temple, and then ostracized from the people until he died in his own house away from the people. Because he was a leper, he was not buried in the burial grounds of the kings. It was a sad end to a king who had accomplished so much in his reign. But his legacy is a warning to everyone who would become presumptuous because of their great accomplishments for the Lord.

Chapter 27
REIGN OF JOTHAM

27:1-9 (2 Kg 15:32-38) Jotham reigned from 740 to 732 B.C. However, for about ten years before 740 he reigned coregent with his father, Uzziah. He was a ruler with administrative skills. He followed after the tradition of his father by building cities and fortresses in the hill country of Judah. As a military leader he led Judah against the Ammonites, subjecting them to paying tribute to the benefit of Judah. The success of his reign is explained in verse 6. He became and remained strong because he prepared his ways before the Lord. He focused on the way of God, and thus God worked for him. He was a good king because he allowed himself to be influenced

by the right ways of God. Unfortunately, though he conducted himself in the ways of God, the people acted corruptly. He did not reign long enough to influence the people for good.

Chapter 28
REIGN OF AHAZ

28:1-4 (2 Kg 16:1-9) Ahaz, who reigned from 732 to 716 B.C., was certainly anything but a good king. He followed after the idolatrous tradition of the kings of the northern kingdom. Contrary to Jotham who preceded him, he succumbed to the evil ways of the populace. ***Burned his children:*** He sacrificed his children as offerings to false gods. He spiritually led Judah to follow after any worship that would please the people.

28:5-15 ***Carried away ... captives:*** God had warned both the northern and southern kingdoms that they would eventually be carried away into captivity if they forsook His law. In order to warn them that this would be the eventual end of Israel, there were minor defeats and captivities that took place in Israel before the Assyrians finally took the northern kingdom into captivity in 722/21 B.C. and the southern kingdom of Judah into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. As punishment for Ahaz's sin, Syria defeated Judah and carried away some of the people to Damascus as captives. At this time Judah was also defeated by her northern brothers. ***Carried away captive of their brethren 200,000:*** When Israel defeated Judah, Israel sought to take into captivity and make slaves of 200,000 of their fellow Israelites. But this was not to be. God immediately sent Oded the prophet to tell Israel that they were able to defeat their brethren because God was punishing Judah for her sin. They were to immediately return the captives they took out of Judah. They listened to the message of Oded, and subsequently fed, clothed and allowed the captives to return to their homes in Judah. What is interesting about this event is that the northern and southern kingdoms had become so autonomous from one another at this time in history that they would not only go to war with one another, but they would also take one another captive as foreign nations did with those they defeated. The Israelites had digressed a long way from the times of Joshua where all the tribes fought as one nation against the Canaanites.

28:16-27 ***Sent to the kings of Assyria for help:*** They should have been able to send to their northern brothers for help. But they had just been at war with them. Now they had to go to a foreign nation, a nation that would eventually take their northern brothers into captivity. In this case, the Edomites took captive those of Judah. The Philistines also attacked and became successful in defeating the Judean army. ***The Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz:*** It seems that Ahaz could not get the message of doom that was sent to him from God. There was chaos in Judah because of the sin of Ahaz. But because of his arrogance, he would not lead the people in repentance. And because he would not repent, God unleashed His punishment upon the nation. ***Tilgath-pilneser:*** Or, Tiglath-pileser. Instead of helping, Assyria also afflicted Judah. After Tiglath-pileser defeated both Syria and the northern kingdom, Judah was subjugated to pay tribute. But regardless of God's warning through the prophets, Ahaz continued in his arrogance. He continued to build altars to false gods and encourage the people in apostasy. He brought Judah to a spiritual low, to the point that even the people would not bury him in the tombs of the kings when he died. After his death, it was time for another reformation in Israel, which reformation was brought about by his son, Hezekiah.

Chapter 29
REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

29:1-2 (2 Kg 18–20; Is 36–39) Hezekiah reigned from 716 to 687 B.C., though he reigned coregently with his father Ahaz from 729 to 720 B.C. (2 Kg 18:10). He came to the throne when Judah was at its greatest spiritual low under his father. Because of the reforms that he made, he was, with Josiah, one of the two greatest restorationists of Judah. Because of the restoration work of these two kings, the southern kingdom existed almost a century and a half longer than the northern kingdom. The contrast between himself and his father, Ahaz, was significant. Ahaz was extremely polytheistic. Hezekiah was truly monotheistic. Ahaz was syncretistic in all his actions of worship of different imagined gods. Hezekiah purged Judah of the idol worship of false gods. The point is that a son has no right to blame his father for wicked behavior. Each person will be held accountable for his own sin at the final judgment (See comments 2 Co 5:10).

29:3-19 ***He opened the doors of the house of the Lord:*** It seems inconceivable that the temple doors had been closed, thus indicating that the priests had terminated their ministry for the people. This had occurred under the reign of Ahaz, Hezekiah's father. The influence and intimidation of the prophets of Baal were strong during the reign of Ahaz (28:24). They had shut down the temple. ***Carry the rubbish out:*** The temple had been shut down by Ahaz, and thus it became an unused building that collected rubbish. It took the Levites eight days to clean out the rubbish and cleanse the temple. All the honor that was given to the temple at the time when its construction was completed in the days of Solomon, had long since faded away. We would conclude that by this time in the history of Judah, the people had lost much of their religiosity. They had become truly secular, and thus religious matters were of little value in a society that had become very materialistic. ***Trouble ... desolation ... jeering:*** The nations around Judah who knew their history mocked the nation that affirmed that God was her protector. It seems that the surrounding nations were more religious in their spirit than Judah at the end of the reign of Ahaz.

29:20-30 The offerings were instituted again with the ministry of the priests. Once the temple was cleaned and cleansed, those who were responsible for the ministry of the temple service were back at work. All that Ahaz had done to desecrate the temple was rectified, and now Hezekiah was ready to start working on reforms outside Jerusalem.

29:31-36 The offerings that were brought were for eating in order to reestablish the purpose for which the offerings were brought to the priests and Levites. In this case, there were so many animals brought that the priests could not prepare all the animals for cooking. Therefore, the Levites helped in the

preparation of the animals. ***So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order:*** Before Hezekiah could initiate a restoration throughout the country, he had to first set in order the temple service in Jerusalem. The priests and Levites had to assume their responsibilities. After this was accomplished, then the call went out to all the people of Judah, and to those in the northern kingdom, to come for a restitution of the Passover feast. Hezekiah first led the leaders in a spiritual restoration, and then he led the leaders to restore as many as possible of his fellow Israelites.

Chapter 30

30:1-9 ***Sent to all Israel:*** This invitation was significant. We do not know exactly when it was sent out in reference to the fall of the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom went into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. The invitation could have gone out a few years after this captivity. We would assume that Hezekiah listened to the prophets at this time, and thus called for his northern brothers who wanted to remain faithful to God to come out of the apostate Israel that remained in the northern kingdom after its fall. If he sent out the invitation after 722/21, then he asked them to come out of the fallen Israel. Whatever the case was at the time, the invitation went out to all the tribes of Israel for this unique celebration of the Passover feast. ***Will come again:*** Hezekiah's call was to the faithful who remained in the northern territories. He believed that even those who were taken captive from the northern ten tribes would come again from their captivity.

30:10-12 ***Laughed ... scorn ... mocked:*** Many of the northern kingdom had become truly secular. They had given up their religious heritage, and had become totally materialistic as a culture. These were those who mocked the invitation to come to a religious rededication at the Passover. ***Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun:*** At least from these three mentioned tribes a remnant came to Judah, believing that their brethren who had been taken captive would return from captivity if they repented. We must never think that the totality of the northern ten tribes were taken into captivity. At least from these three tribes a remnant came to Judah. In the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C. when Judah fell, we must assume that a remnant of the northern tribes was among the captives who were carried to Babylon. From these a remnant returned from captivity in 536 B.C. (See comments of Ezra). At least we know that some from the descendants of Asher, as Anna's forefathers, were of the returnees, for she was a prophetess in Jerusalem at the time of the coming of the Messiah (See Lk 2:36). ***Many ... humbled themselves:*** Whenever apostasy sets in, we must never assume that everyone has gone with the majority into apostasy. In this case, there were still those in the northern kingdom who wanted to serve the Lord according to His will.

30:13-27 ***Took away the altars:*** These were the altars for Baal worship. Not only was the temple cleaned and cleansed, but also the city of Jerusalem. ***Feast of unleavened bread:*** This feast followed the eating of the Passover lamb. ***Were not sanctified:*** Since the occasion came about quickly, many of the participants were still unclean, and thus according to the law, could not eat the Passover. ***Hezekiah prayed for them:*** This was one time when a greater law prevailed over that which was written. It was a greater law that they eat the Passover. This law was greater than the law of being clean in order to eat the Passover. Therefore, upon the prayer of Hezekiah, the Lord "healed" them for this special occasion (See comments Mt 12:1-8). ***Continue another seven days:*** It was truly a great celebration. It was a fourteen day occasion where the twelve tribes of Israel were reunited in spirit. Nothing as this had happened since the days Solomon completed the construction of the temple, which was about 230 years before this occasion.

Chapter 31

31:1-21 Now it was time to get down to the business of national restoration. Hezekiah was leading a restoration, not a reformation. Reformations only reform existing structures. In a restoration, existing religious structures are torn down and dumped in the Brook Kidron. The people at this time had made a massive paradigm shift in their thinking. The occasion of the fourteen-day "Passover lectureship" had united their hearts, and now it was time for astringent leadership on the part of Hezekiah. The result of the restoration was that as a united force all those who were in Jerusalem went throughout all Judah and eradicated the high places and altars of idolatrous religions. ***Hezekiah appointed divisions:*** Hezekiah's next step was to organize the repentant. He organized the priests and Levites to assume their responsibility to lead spiritually the people and to carry out their responsibilities of ministry in reference to their physical duties for the people. ***The king's portion:*** In order to lead the people as the king, the people had to see the king himself giving to the offering. Hezekiah led by example. In order to encourage the priests and Levites, he commanded that the inhabitants of Jerusalem should contribute to their support. When the people willingly contributed, the priests and Levites were greatly encouraged. ***When Hezekiah ... saw the heaps:*** Hezekiah gave praise to God for working on the hearts of those who willingly contributed to the support of the priests and Levites. When God's workers are supported by the people, God is glorified (See Dt 12:19; 14:22-29). ***Over the freewill offerings:*** The distribution of the offering was organized. Specific people were designated in order that the contributions be evenly distributed to the priests and Levites (See comments At 6:1-7). ***With all his heart:*** This was total commitment on the part of Hezekiah to do the will of the Lord (See Mt 22:37).

Chapter 32

32:1-8 (2 Kg 18:13 – 19:37; Is 36:1 – 37:38) Some have suggested that the date of this invasion took place about fifteen years after the Passover celebration of chapter 30, or in 710 B.C. Upon his ascension to the throne in Assyria, Sennacherib had to put down many revolts throughout his kingdom. One of the most significant discoveries that has been made was the discovery of the Sennacherib Prism (See Encyclopedic Study Guide, F., Sennacherib's Prism). In this chapter is recorded a massive invasion of Judah. In his Prism,

Sennacherib claims to have laid siege to 46 fortified cities of Hezekiah. Other archaeological data supports this claim. Archaeological excavations have revealed the destruction of Judean cities from Phoenicia and Philistia all the way to, but not including, Jerusalem. Sennacherib stated on his Prism that he made a ferocious assault against Palestine in order to put down rebellion against his reign. However, he never claims to have conquered Jerusalem. He only boasted that he had "shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage." The writers of the Kings and Chronicles tell the rest of the story.

32:9-23 At the end of Sennacherib's campaign into Judah, he came to the walls of Jerusalem. While engaged in a battle against Lachish at the time, he sent Rabshakeh to Jerusalem to taunt the Israelites who had taken their stand with God and behind Hezekiah and Isaiah. Since Lachish was only about 40 kilometers southwest of Jerusalem, the inhabitants of Jerusalem could surely see the smoke rising from Lachish as the army of Sennacherib burned the city. But with the encouragement of Isaiah, who was at the time with Hezekiah in Jerusalem, God promised that Sennacherib would never enter the city of Jerusalem (See Is 37:14-38).

32:24-33 (2 Kg 20:1-21; Is 38:1 – 39:8) ***Hezekiah was sick unto death:*** Compared to 2 Kings 20 and Isaiah 38, little information is given in Chronicles concerning the sickness of Hezekiah. ***Hezekiah did not repay according to the benefit done to him:*** We are not told the specifics of Hezekiah's pride. Much had been done for him by God, but it seems he failed to give thanks to God for all His blessings. Instead, Hezekiah became somewhat self-confident, and thus God sought to humble him. Upon rebuke of his pride, he did humble himself before the Lord. Judgment for his pride, however, did not come on Judah in his lifetime (See 2 Kg 20:19; Is 39:5-7). ***Stopped the upper watercourse:*** See comments 2 Kg 20:21,22. ***Ambassadors ... of Babylon:*** See comments 2 Kg 20:12-19.

Chapter 33
REIGN OF MANASSEH

33:1-9 (2 Kg 21:1-9,17,18) Manasseh reigned from 687 to 642 B.C., but reigned coregently with his father, Hezekiah, from about 696 to 687 B.C. He was the longest reigning king of Judah. ***Abominations of the nations:*** All that we would conceive concerning the wickedness of the nations of the time, we would conceive as the depths to which Judah digressed through the leadership of Manasseh. The masses were no longer the people of God. It seems that Manasseh was rife with the abominations of the nations. He built altars to false gods, even in the temple. He offered his children as sacrifices and involved himself with witches and mediums. ***More evil than the nations:*** He led the people to be worse than the Canaanites that Israel had driven out of the land (See comments Gn 15:16). However, out of the depths of their apostasy that was led by Manasseh, God was able to bring Judah back to some extent through a repentant Manasseh.

33:10-13 In order to delay the captivity to which Judah was headed, God took Manasseh into Babylonian captivity. ***Hooks ... fetters:*** With hooks in their lips and fetters on their ankles, Manasseh and others were taken into captivity. We know little of this captivity, other than the fact that in his situation in Babylon, Manasseh prayed for forgiveness. His captivity accomplished what God wanted, that is, his repentance.

33:14-17 When Manasseh was restored, he realized that there was only one God. This realization would later be characteristic of the remnant of all Israel who came forth from the captivities of Assyria and Babylon in 536 B.C. Never again were the Israelites tempted with beliefs in false gods, even to this day. ***The people continued to sacrifice on the high places:*** When Manasseh repented he did a great deal in restoring the nation to God. However, the people loved their high places, and thus went only so far in their restoration with Manasseh. Manasseh could not undo all the evil that he had done before his repentance.

33:18-20 The legacy that was left by Manasseh was his sin. Though he repented and sought to rectify the wickedness of his early life, we still see him as one of the most wicked kings of Judah who led Judah down a road of apostasy from which they did not recover.

REIGN OF AMON

33:21-25 (2 Kg 21:19-26) Amon was named after an Egyptian god. He reigned for only two years from 642 to 640 B.C. Amon took up where Manasseh had left off during his days of wickedness before his repentance. Amon was unrepentant, and thus followed after the desires of his own lawlessness. He set an example of wickedness for the nation. He was killed in a conspiracy by his own servants in his own house.

Chapter 34
REIGN OF JOSIAH

34:1-13 (2 Kg 22:1-20) Josiah reigned from 640 to 608 B.C. and was the last and greatest restorationist of Judah. We are not told why he had a religious heart and a zeal to restore the religious behavior of Judah. He was possibly influenced by the repentant nature of Manasseh, realizing that if either he or Judah did not repent, he and the nation would suffer the same consequences as Manasseh when he was carried away into captivity. What we do understand is that when he finally secured a copy of the book of the law and read the curse that God would pour out on Israel for her disobedience, he astringently led to bring Judah back to the law of God. He purged the nation of the high places, cut down the groves, and destroyed the carved and molten images. He destroyed the altars of Baal and burned the bones of the priests of Baal. He even went beyond the borders of Judah and initiated restoration in places in the northern kingdom territory. He realized that if he did not lead Judah in a full restoration, the nation would end up as their northern brothers who were at this time in Assyrian captivity.

34:14-33 The legacy of Josiah will always be the response he had to reading the word of God. He was righteous before God before the discovery of the book of the law. However, when he read for himself, his response to what God said He would do to His people if they turned from Him was enough to set him into action to carry out one of the greatest restora-

tions of all history. He saved his people from exile during his lifetime, but their apostasy had gone too far. They would still go into exile, but not during his lifetime.

Chapter 35

35:1-19 (2 Kg 23:21-23) ***Not be a burden on your shoulders:*** The ark may have been removed from the temple during the repairs of the temple. What Josiah was probably saying was metaphorical in reference to the anxiety of the Levites concerning the security of the ark. For years it had survived the apostasy of former kings. Josiah here reassured them that they should worry no more, for he would guarantee its safety. ***Passover:*** As in the days of Hezekiah eighty years before when a restoration was accomplished and celebrated with the eating of the Passover lamb, so on this occasion Josiah called for a celebration. It seems, however, that this Passover was even greater than the one that was celebrated during the restoration of Hezekiah. The significance of the Passover was to commemorate their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. In this celebration they were delivered from the idol worship of their fathers. Josiah had led a new generation of people out of the paradigm of the fathers, and in doing so, he instituted change. Unfortunately, the sins of the fathers were deep in the culture of the apostate Judah, and thus in the few years after the death of Josiah, the people would find themselves in the bondage of the Babylonians.

35:20-27 (2 Kg 23:28-30) We are not told why Josiah made this foolish move. Pharaoh had warned him to stay out of the conflict between himself and the Babylonians. The Pharaoh of Egypt was on a mission to assist the Assyrians at Carchemish where the Assyrians were making a last stand against the Babylonians. The Carchemish battle occurred in 609 B.C., which date marks the year when Josiah was killed. It seems that Josiah's youthful pride moved him to go into a conflict in which he had no business involving himself. God allowed him to do that which He knew would end in his death. Sometimes God allows the righteous to die without explanation. But in this case, we assume that God was already carrying out plans for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah. He did not want Josiah in his old age to be taken into exile. It was better for him to die a hero of faith than to be humiliated by going into exile. ***Jeremiah lamented for Josiah:*** We are sure that this great prophet of God wondered why the righteous should die in the way that Josiah died. One lesson from this incident is learned. God is not obligated to protect us from our foolishness. Josiah was so loved among the people that the entire nation lamented his death.

Chapter 36

REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ

36:1-4 (2 Kg 23:30 – 24:20; Jr 52:1-11) The death of Josiah in 609 B.C. was the beginning of the end of the southern kingdom of Israel. Josiah's son, Jehoahaz (Joahaz or Shallum), reigned for only three months. He was the people's choice to be king. However, he was deposed and carried into Egyptian captivity by Pharaoh Neco. The Pharaoh then appointed his brother, Jehoiakim (Eliakim), to be the king over the people.

REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM

36:5-8 Jehoiakim was the oldest son of Josiah. Because he had the backing of Pharaoh Neco, he was the vassal of Pharaoh for eleven years. However, events in the world had changed and the Babylonian Empire, after the defeat of the Assyrians in 609 B.C., came into prominence at the end of his eleven year reign. He was subsequently replaced by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who took him into captivity. This was the first conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, which resulted not only in the change of Judean kings, but also the plundering of the treasures of the temple.

REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN

36:9,10 597 B.C. was the first defeat of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. It was during this time that Nebuchadnezzar made a regime change in Jerusalem. He took Jehoiakim into captivity and replaced him with Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin. The people of God had now gone from God-anointed kings as Saul, then David and Solomon, to kings the people appointed for themselves, and now to kings that were appointed by foreign governments. ***Eight years old:*** This variant is not to be preferred over the eighteen years of age that is recorded in 2 Kings 24:8.

REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH

36:11-14 When Jehoiachin did that which was evil, he too was taken into captivity and replaced with Zedekiah, another son of Josiah (2 Kg 24:18 – 25:21). Zedekiah was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah remained as king from 597 B.C. to the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Zedekiah was a defiant king. The final days of the southern kingdom came as a result of his defiance against Babylonian control. Judah had already become a secular state. What brought the final end of the kingdom were the bad judgments of those who were placed in power. In the case of Zedekiah, he had rejected the counsel of Jeremiah and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. He led the priests and the people to do the same, and thus, the authority that put him in power came from Babylon to take him from power. The result of the insurrection was the total destruction of Jerusalem, including the temple, royal palace and all the major buildings of the city. The Israelites were condemned to seventy years of captivity, long enough for a rebellious generation to die off in order that a new generation of captive-born leaders to come into influence and subsequently lead a repentant remnant back from Babylonian captivity (See Jr 25:12; 29:10).

36:15-21 ***Brought to Babylon:*** From this statement we assume that the writer of the Chronicles was in Babylon at the time he wrote. The Chronicles were written after Cyrus assumed control of the Babylonian Empire. It was at this time that the Medo-Persian Empire came into existence. ***Sabbaths:*** See Lv 26:34-43; Dn 9:2. The land rested from being used for crops. ***Jeremiah:*** He had prophesied that the Israelites would go into seventy years of captivity (Jr 29:10).

DECREE OF CYRUS OF PERSIA

36:22,23 (Er 1:1-4) In 539 B.C. the army of Cyrus took

control of Babylon. Cyrus was the king of the Medo-Persian Empire. A year later in 538 B.C., he gave the decree that is here recorded. The decree released those Israelites who were in captivity to go back to Jerusalem in order to rebuild their city and the temple (See Is 44:28; 45:1; Er 1:1-3). In doing so, they were to preserve Israel for the coming promises concerning the Messiah. Since the Medo-Persian Empire included all the territory of the former Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, then the Jews who were given the opportunity to return came from all the tribes of Israel (see comments of Ezra). In the writing of the decree, God's promise that a remnant would return was fulfilled. Israel was once again in the promised land in order to wait for the coming Messiah. For this reason a remnant of Israel was preserved. Though they no longer had possession of the land, they were in an occupied land in order to protect them in the four centuries to come.

Ezra

WRITER

Ezra, the scribe and priest, was the writer of this book. His name means "help." Ezra was a Levitical priest. He was the great grandson of Hilkiah who was the high priest during the reign of Josiah (7:1-5), and was also a descendant of Aaron. As a scribe, he was one who was educated in the law of God and a dedicated teacher (7:6). He was very zealous for the word of God, having a deep conviction concerning obedience to God (7:10). As a student of the word of God, he took it upon himself to lead the people in obedience to the law. He taught the word both to the people of God in captivity, as well as to those who had returned to Judah after the captivity (Ne 8:1-8).

Ezra was born among the Babylonian exiles and raised in Babylon (7:6). Because of his work as a scribe among the Israelite captives, he was held in high esteem among the Medo-Persian officials.

Because of his zeal for the word of God, and the restoration of Israel, many Bible students give credit to Ezra for writing, not only this book, but also 1 & 2 Chronicles and Psalm 119.

Since the Jewish synagogues originated among the Jews in captivity, some have accredited Ezra with the establishment of this system of teaching among the captives. He is also traditionally given credit for establishing the Sanhedrin court of Jerusalem. He and those who worked closely with him, are given credit for bringing the canon of Old Testament Scriptures together for the returned remnant of Israel who lived in Palestine. We can give credit to Ezra for preserving the Scriptures.

DATE

If Ezra was the writer of the book, then it was probably written sometime between 440 and 400 B.C. Some Bible students have assumed that the book was written by someone other than Ezra, and thus have assigned the book to a later date, possibly from 330 to 300 B.C. The reason for this late date is based on the mention of Jaddua at the end of the list of high priests in Nehemiah 12:22. Josephus stated that Jaddua was the high priest during the time of Alexander the Great around 330 B.C. (*Antiquities*, xi, 8:4). However, this latter date is difficult to support for different reasons. First, the name Jaddua was a common name, and thus could refer to another priest by the same name. Second, there are several sections in both Ezra and Nehemiah that were written with the first person pronoun (See 7:27 – 9:15; Ne 1:1 – 7:5; 12:27-43; 13:7-31). Other sections of Ezra seem to have been written on the foundation of what was personally experienced in the life of the writer who lived and worked before and contemporary with Nehemiah (See 7:1-10; 10:1-44). Third, the Aramaic language was used during the time of captives as the international trade language in which all formal documents were written (See 4:8 – 6:18; 7:12-26). The inclusion of the Aramaic documents that are within the book seem to indicate that the original writer wrote in Hebrew, and only copied the documents that were written in Aramaic. The Aramaic of the documents that were included in the book are characteristic with the Aramaic of the 5th century B.C. Fourth, the polished Hebrew that was used in writing the book indicates that someone as a skilled scribe as Ezra would be the writer. God used the skill of Ezra in this case to communicate His word.

BOOK

The book of Ezra and Nehemiah cover a period of time of about 80 years. The books were originally two separate compositions. By 100 B.C., however, they had been combined as one book. The Septuagint retained the two as one book. Origen (A.D. 185-253), however, separated them into two books. Bible translators have followed the tradition of the translations of Wycliffe (A.D. 1382) and Coverdale (A.D. 1535) by separating Ezra and Nehemiah as two separate books.

Together, the two books explain the restoration of the remnant to the land of promise, the resettlement of the people, the rebuilding of the temple, and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. These two books were written in order to provide a final historical link of the Israel-

ite people from the time of the Babylonian captivity to the reestablishment of the Jews in the land of promise in hope of the Messiah to come. The central purpose of this history was to reveal God's promise that Israel would be restored from their captivity, which restoration was promised by His prophets in order to maintain the light of the house of David.

Focus in the book of Ezra is on the dedication of the people to the word of God, which dedication cleansed them of any tendencies toward idolatry that was characteristic of their forefathers. Both Ezra and Nehemiah focus on the restoration of the word of God in the lives of the Israelites as God intended it to be used among His people from the time of Mt. Sinai. He commanded that they guard the purity of the Israelite race in order that the seedline promise that was made to Abraham be fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah (Gn 12:1-3). For this reason, Ezra instructed the returnees in matters concerning their marriage to foreign women, which women the returnees put away in order to maintain the identity of Israel. It was necessary that Israel maintain her identity as a race in order that all men see the fulfillment of the seedline promises that were made to Abraham, and reaffirmed in the seedline of David.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 538 B.C. the Medes and Persians overcame the Babylonian Empire, and thus became the custodians of the captives of all former kingdoms that they had conquered. Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king who is mentioned in the book, was a humanitarian. He believed that his subjects would be more loyal while enjoying freedom, than being in the bondage of the state. In order to promote this loyalty, Cyrus, as well as other kings of the Empire who followed him, aided those people over whom they exercised control in order to rebuild their temples. The sense of freedom of religion that was enjoyed by the captives encouraged the loyalty of the people toward the Empire.

In 537 B.C. Cyrus allowed an initial group of 49,897 Jewish captives to return to Palestine under the leadership of Zerubbabel. When these returnees arrived in Palestine in the same year, the first thing they did was rebuild the altar upon which they restored the offering of sacrifices. The following year in 536 B.C., work was started to rebuild the temple. But because of opposition, the work was stopped. In 520 B.C. the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, exhort the people to renew their efforts to rebuild the temple. As a result, in 516 B.C. the temple was completed.

In 479 B.C. Esther became the queen of the Medo-Persian Empire when she married King Ahasuerus. It was during this time that the remaining Jews who had not returned to Palestine, but remained in Persian territory outside Palestine, were preserved from the murderous scheme of Haman.

In 458/457 B.C. Ezra took 1,750 Jewish men and their families from Babylon to Jerusalem. It is upon the background of this second return of captives that Ezra wrote chapters 7-10.

In 445/444 B.C. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem in order to stir up the people to finish rebuilding of the walls of the city. Because lethargy had set in among the returnees, Nehemiah stirred the people to rededicate themselves to God. In 432 B.C. Nehemiah made a second visit to Jerusalem.

The element of time is often lost in the study of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The work of these two men extended over many years. For example, there is almost 60 years of time between chapters 6 and 7. When considered together, there were essentially two periods of history that are covered by Ezra and Nehemiah. The first period was about 20 years from 537 to 517 B.C. This period extended from the first year of the reign of King Cyrus to the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. This was the time when Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the high priest returned to rebuild the temple. The second period of time was approximately 25 years, from 458 to 433 B.C. This was the time when Nehemiah was the governor and Ezra was the priest. This was a time of restoration that resulted in the completion of the walls of the city. It was during this time that there was a spiritual renewal among the people. The renewal was so strong that the Israelites never again digressed into idolatry.

1st Return Under Zerubbabel
(1:1 – 2:70)

Outline: (1) The decree of Cyrus (1:1-4), (2) Preparation to return (1:5-11), (3) List of returnees (2:1-70)

Chapter 1
THE DECREE OF CYRUS

The first section of Ezra (chs 1-6) is a record of the history of the first returnees under the leadership of Zerubbabel. This group rebuilt the temple. The last section (chs 7-10) gives a history of the second return of captives under the leadership of Ezra. Ezra's primary purpose was to restore worship according to the law of Moses, as well as instruct the people in the law of God for the purpose of preserving the Israelite race.

1:1-4 ***Cyrus:*** This was Cyrus the Great (559-530 B.C.), the king who was in the prophecy of Isaiah (Is 45:1). He was the founder of the Persian Empire. After coming to power in the small kingdom of Pars in southern Iran between 553 and 540 B.C., he subdued Media which is in central Iran. He also subdued Lydia in western Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) and countries from the Aegean Sea to the Indus River. According to the Babylonian Chronicle, Cyrus entered and took control

of Babylon without a battle on October 12, 539 B.C. With this victory, Cyrus reigned over all the former Babylonian territory that included all of Mesopotamia. One of the greater discoveries of history was the discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder, whereon Cyrus explained many of his feats (See Encyclopedic Study Guide, Archaeology and the Bible, G., Cyrus Cylinder.). ***First year of Cyrus:*** This was his first year of reign over Babylonian territory that began in 538/537 B.C. His actual reign over the Medes and Persians began earlier in 557 B.C. ***Mouth of Jeremiah:*** The 70 years of captivity were drawing to a close (Jr 29:10-12). The 70 years can be calculated from the time of the first captivity of Daniel and his friends in 606 B.C. (Dn 1:1) to the first return of captives in 536 B.C. ***Stirred up the spirit of Cyrus:*** It may have been that a faithful Israelite had pointed out to Cyrus that his name was in the prophecies of Isaiah that were written many years before (Is 44:28; 45:1-4,13). ***To make a proclamation:*** Cyrus was a humanitarian. He believed that if people enjoyed their own freedom in their homelands they would remain loyal to the king. Therefore, upon his conquest of different peoples of the world, one of his first edicts was to all former captives to return to their homelands, which homelands were within the domain of the Medo-Persian Empire. When he took over the Babylonian territories, the Jews were allowed to return to their homeland and rebuild their center of worship. The accounts of this proclamation in 2 Chronicles 36:22,23 and Ezra 1:2-4 were the public proclamations of the decree. The quotation of the proclamation in Ezra 6:3-5 was the official recording of the decree. ***Freewill offering for the house of God:*** We must not assume that all Israelites returned from their homes in captivity. Only a remnant of each tribe returned to Palestine. The others remained in their lands of captivity, for some had been there since the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C., a period of almost 200 years. They knew no other life. It was to these that the early evangelists, specifically Paul, went in their early missionary journeys to preach the gospel to all the world. When a remnant of these returned from the lands of their captivity in the historical context of Ezra and Nehemiah, they asked for contributions from those Jews who decided to remain where their forefathers had lived for almost two centuries. However, those who stayed were not considered captives when the decree of Cyrus was issued. At least by the decree they were set free to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem. The historical incidents that surrounded the deliverance of the Jews during Esther's time reveal the social environment of the Jews outside the land of Palestine. They enjoyed significant freedom and were allowed to carry on with business within the territory of the Medo-Persian Empire, which territory included all the lands to which all Jews had been taken into captivity during the preceding two centuries.

PREPARATION TO RETURN

1:5,6 There were almost 50,000 who participated in the first return. Because this number was so great, others who did not go were asked to contribute both to their journey and to the rebuilding of the temple. It was certainly an exciting exodus of people who sought to return to Jerusalem in order to reinstitute the altar sacrifices. It was similar to those who came out of Egyptian captivity in order to go to the promised land almost 1,000 years before this event. Since the journey would take almost two months, everyone was asked to contribute to the journey. From the text, it seems that both Jews and Gentiles contributed to the journey.

1:7-11 ***The vessels of the house of God:*** These were the vessels that were taken by Nebuchadnezzar during the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (2 Kg 25:14-16; 2 Ch 36:10,18; Dn 1:2). Sheshbazzar: He is later referred to as the governor and the one to whom credit was given for leading in laying the foundation of the temple. Because these responsibilities and accomplishments were given to Zerubbabel, we conclude that Sheshbazzar is possibly another name for Zerubbabel (See 3:8-11; Hg 1:1,14; Zc 4:9). The name Sheshbazzar was probably the name by which he was known among the royalty of Babylon, whereas the name Zerubbabel was the name by which he was known among the Jews. However, the argument that Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar are the same person is not conclusive.

Chapter 2

LIST OF RETURNEES

2:1-70 This list of individuals emphasizes the religious leaders of the returnees. The name Nehemiah is not the same as the one who is the primary personality of the book of Nehemiah, neither is this Mordecai the cousin of Esther, for this event took place before the events of Esther (Et 2:5,6). The listing of the names is similar in purpose to the one that Israel first made when they came out of Egyptian captivity. Genealogies were very important to the Jews. In reference to those who initially settled in the promised land after the wilderness wandering, the possession of the land here was likewise based on family ownership. For this reason, the genealogies of the families were of legal importance because land possession was based on being a member of a particular family. However, with the Levites and priests, the listing of names was not for the purpose of land ownership, for they were given no possession of land. Their listing of the Levites was in reference to their right to serve as priests and their right to minister to the people while being supported by the people. With the returnees, the listing of the names in this chapter was not only a list of leaders by their families, but also a list of those who would serve in the temple administration. This was a new beginning for Israel, and thus the genealogies were important in order to establish ownership of land, and in reference to the priests and Levites, the right to serve at the altar and minister to the people. Those who could not prove their family genealogy to be of the tribe of Levi could not serve according to the responsibilities that were given to the Levites under the law. Fortunately, these lists of names have been preserved because they were included in inspired literature. However, the other lists of the genealogies of Jewish families were destroyed during the various destructions of Jerusalem and the temple, ending with the final destruction of A.D. 70. ***Nethinims:*** These were temple servants. ***Urim ... Thummim:*** These were possibly items that were in the ephod of the priest that were extracted

in order to determine "yes" or "no" answers (Ex 28:30). ***Levites:*** The Levites were the spiritual servants to the nation of Israel. They originally lived throughout the land in 48 designated cities that were given specifically to them. ***Priests:*** The priests were the descendants of Aaron, and were commissioned with the most honorable service at the house of God. In this first group of returnees, there were more priests with the returnees than those of the tribe of Levi. ***The whole assembly:*** The number that returned was about fifty thousand. However, this was by no means the entirety of the number of Jews who lived in the territory of captivity. The events of the story of Esther took place about 50 years after this initial return. Esther's ordeal concerning the struggle of the Jews in the land of captivity indicates that there were a great deal of Jews still residing in the domain of the Medo-Persian Empire, but not in Palestine. We must keep in mind that the Medo-Persian Empire included the territory of the former Assyrian Empire, as well as the territory that was once controlled by the Babylonians. The Assyrians had taken Israelites into captivity in 722/21 B.C. These Israelites had been living in captivity for almost two centuries before the time of this first return of captives. They were well established in the economy of the Medo-Persian Empire, and thus in their vast numbers, the greater majority of Jews did not return to Palestine. We could estimate that there were several hundred thousand Israelites living in the territory of the Medo-Persian Empire at the time of the historical events of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. But only a few thousand of these returned to the land of Palestine. Their presence in the land of their captivity presented the opportunity many years later for the evangelization of the world in the first century. These exiled Jews, who were expatriates in their land of captivity, became the foundation upon which the gospel was first preached to the world. After the temple service was reinstituted in Jerusalem, many Jews of the world made occasional journeys to Jerusalem to celebrate the annual Passover/Pentecost feasts. Several regions are mentioned in Acts 2:9-11 from which Jews came to the Passover/Pentecost of A.D. 30 when the Holy Spirit was poured out in fulfillment of Joel 2. About 3,000 were baptized on that occasion. It is interesting to note that some of those who were present at the A.D. 30 Passover/Pentecost were from the Far East regions of Parthia and Media, with some from Mesopotamia. When some of these were converted during the A.D. 30 Passover/Pentecost event, they returned to their synagogues where they had lived for centuries. They told of the great events that took place in Jerusalem. The following year, thousands of others made the journey in order to hear for themselves (See comments Is 2:1-3). As groups of Jews traveled to Jerusalem for the annual Passover/Pentecost feasts in the years to come after A.D. 30, they sat at the feet of the apostles who remained teaching in Jerusalem for almost twenty years after the A.D. 30 event. They remained there every year, waiting for a new group of Jews to come to hear the message of the gospel that would go out of Jerusalem to all the world. We must see in the work of Ezra and others who led to rebuild the altar in Jerusalem for sacrifices, the work of God to set the foundation for the evangelization of the world that would come about 500 years after the events that are recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. We must not forget that God was working in these events in order to set the stage for the coming of His Son. When the time was right, He sent forth His Son (Gl 4:4). ***All Israel in their cities:*** From this statement we would correctly assume that representatives of all twelve tribes had returned with this initial group of returnees. These all settled throughout the land in their cities, according to their heritage. We must also keep in mind that much of the land had been previously repopulated by those the Assyrians had brought into the land after the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom in 722/21 B.C. There was thus a great deal of intermarriage in the land by the time of the arrival of the first returnees. As a result, the Samaritan race was in existence at the time of the first return of Jewish captives to the land. ***Offered freely for the house:*** There was a very generous spirit among the first returnees. The goal of the first group of returnees was to rebuild the altar in order to initiate the sacrifices, and then rebuild the temple. In order to accomplish this feat, everyone gave something. They returned from the captivity with enough contribution to complete the work. They not only wanted to resettle the land, but also reestablish the Mt. Sinai law by first building the altar, and then by rebuilding the temple.

Restoration Of Worship & Building
(3:1 – 6:22)

Outline: (1) Restoration of the altar and sacrifices (3:1-6), (2) Restoration of temple building (3:7-13), (3) Opposition from enemies (4:1-24), (4) Temple rebuilding renewed (5:1-17), (5) Aid from Darius (6:1-12), (6) Temple completed and dedicated (6:13-22)

Chapter 3

RESTORATION OF THE ALTAR & SACRIFICES

3:1-6 Seventh month: It was planned to initiate the altar sacrifices according to the law on this month since within this month fell the feast of trumpets (Nm 29:1), day of atonement (Lv 16:29; Nm 29:7), and the feast of tabernacles (Lv 23:34-36,39-44; Nm 29:12-38). ***In the cities:*** We would assume that the returnees were living in the cities since they had not been back in the land long enough to have raised crops. ***Built the altar of the God of Israel:*** This was the primary purpose for the return of the first returnees. They sought to restore the sacrificial worship according to the law, thus manifesting to God the priority of their lives. The offerings were communal in that they were the opportunity for the people to come together in Jerusalem for fellowship. When the nation gave their offerings together at the altar, unity was restored and maintained among the people. The annual sacrifices for all Jews throughout the world could now take place if they desired to make the trip from the far corners of their exiled locations to Jerusalem (See comments At 2:9-11). ***Fear was upon them:*** It is evident that the Jews still had a bondage mentality in reference to their mission. The opposition was only from the local people, not foreign nations. They had little confidence in themselves, and thus they were in fear of upsetting those who might cause them trouble. After all, we could assume that most of the returnees were considered foreigners in the land of Palestine.

They had been so long away from Palestine that the Jews were foreigners in the land of promise.

RESTORATION OF TEMPLE BUILDING

3:7-13 It was not until the spring of the second year that the returnees began construction on the temple. Laborers were hired and materials acquired for the construction. Timber was acquired from the same source from which Solomon acquired the cedars of Lebanon for the first temple (2 Ch 2:8,9). Another source of funding for the reconstruction came from the national treasury of Cyrus. The returnees willingly received this contribution from a Gentile king and his government in order to accomplish that which they proposed and needed to do. Construction of this second temple, therefore, was funded in part by the government. The taxes that came to the government in the region came from the people who were residents in Palestine. In an indirect way, therefore, the Samaritans had to help financially in building the temple. ***Older men ... wept:*** Some wept who were old enough to have seen the temple that Solomon built. They wept when they compared the temple that they were to build with the elaborate structure that Solomon built. Though there were sufficient funds to build a similar structure, they could by no means decorate the finished structure with the amount of silver and gold that Solomon used.

Chapter 4

OPPOSITION FROM ENEMIES

4:1-5 ***Enemies:*** Whenever there is a good cause, there are often those with questionable motives who will oppose the cause. The existing Samaritan race, as well as all other peoples who had been brought into Palestine after the initial deportation of the Assyrian captivity, assumed that the reestablishment of the Jews in the land would pose a threat to their own security. At least, they were not willing that their taxes to the state be used to rebuild the Jewish temple. ***For we seek your God:*** Their motives were not pure. Their response to the negative reply of Zerubbabel manifested that they were not sincere in what they asked. They did not seek the God of the Jews. They were not seeking to join the Jews in their quest to rebuild the temple and reinstitute worship of God according to the law. They were only seeking to bring the Jews' God into their polytheistic worship (See 2 Kg 17:24-41). Their desire to join the Jews in the reconstruction of the temple was only a ploy to bring the worship of Israel into conformity with the religious practices that were already going on in Palestine. By doing this, they were proposing that the Jews' work to rebuild the temple would pose no threat to the Medo-Persian Empire. However, it was apparent that the local people had not yet understood the change in policy of the Medo-Persian king, that captives were allowed to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples, even at the expense of the state. When the leaders of Israel refused the requests of the local people, the locals turned on the Jews in order to frustrate their work. Their motives, therefore, were revealed by the hostility they manifested to the Jews after their scheme to help them was rejected. The Jews' rejection of their help manifested that God's people had at this time truly repented. However, by the time of the arrival of Ezra about 60 years later, many of these initial returnees had intermarried with the local descendants of the Canaanites (chs 9,10). ***Frustrate their purpose:*** The antagonism of the Samaritans eventually discouraged the Jews' efforts, and thus they terminated their construction of the temple. Until the arrival of prophets Haggai and Zechariah on the scene, the Jews turned from rebuilding the temple to building their own houses (See Hg 1:4). After the excitement of the return from captivity had worn off, the continued opposition of the local inhabitants discouraged the Jews in accomplishing their primary objective. They turned to building their lives instead of focusing on the building of the temple. ***Hired counselors:*** The opposition was not a one time occurrence. It continued to the reign of Darius. Satan will not cease his opposition of good works. It is for this reason that the righteous must realize that opposition is often an indication that one is going in the right direction for God.

4:6-23 Chapter 4 was written to review the opposition to the work of the first returnees. The chapter begins with a review of the work that started when Cyrus was king (536-530 B.C.). However, in verse 6 the writer goes forward in time to the reign of Xerxes. And in verses 7-23 he goes forward to the time of Artaxerxes when the Jews were seeking to rebuild the walls of the city. The rebuilding of the walls was the occasion of the book of Nehemiah. In verse 24, the writer reverts back to 520 B.C., the second year of King Darius when the Jews renewed their efforts to rebuild the temple upon the exhortation of Haggai and Zechariah. ***Ahasuerus:*** Or, Xerxes, who reigned from 485 to 465 B.C. ***Artaxerxes:*** This king reigned from 464 to 424 B.C. These kings reigned over the Medo-Persian Empire during a time of great opposition to the Jews' work in Palestine to rebuild the temple and walls of the city. The initial returnees came back to Palestine in 536 B.C. in order to rebuild the temple. This work was finally completed in 516 B.C. They then began rebuilding the walls of the city. ***Aramaic:*** This was the trade language of the day in which all official documents were written. This was also the language that was spoken in the land of captivity, and thus the returnees possibly spoke this language when they returned to the land of Palestine. ***Osnapper:*** This name refers to Ashurbanipal who is not named in any other place of the Bible. He was probably the king of Assyria who allowed Manasseh to return from exile (2 Ch 33:11-13), and possibly the unnamed Assyrian king who brought people from other countries into the land of Palestine (2 Kg 17:24). ***The River:*** Or, the Euphrates River. ***Building the rebellious and the evil city:*** The Jews had a reputation for being a rebellious people. They had initiated the building of the temple in 536 B.C. Verses 1-5 are written in reference to this work. However, reference in verses 6-23 seem to refer to the building of the walls of the city. We are not told if the temple was completely rebuilt at the time they started on the walls. If it was, and the Jews started rebuilding the city with its walls when they were working on the temple, then the Samaritans were even more concerned with the threat of all Jews. Thus a letter was written to Artaxerxes in order to have the building stopped, which it was by order of the king.

This first attempt to rebuild the walls of the city was in the early reign of Artaxerxes, around 465 B.C. ***They will not pay:*** In order to generate questions in the mind of Artaxerxes, those who opposed the Jews resorted to slander. They assumed that the Jews' motives were rebellion, and thus assumed that if the city walls were rebuilt they would stop paying their taxes. The evil speech of the Samaritans worked, for Artaxerxes terminated the work.

4:24 It was during this time that the prophet Haggai (Hg 1:1-5) encouraged Zerubbabel to finish the job of rebuilding the temple. It was completed in 516 B.C. When Darius succeeded Cyrus to the throne, he first had to establish his reign by putting down various threats, which efforts he explained in his Behistun Inscription. Once his reign was stabilized, he allowed the Jews to continue rebuilding the temple. It thus took the Jews about sixteen years to complete the rebuilding of the temple, counting the time they terminated the work because of opposition and the decree of Artaxerxes. However, in 520 B.C. their work to rebuild was resumed with the encouragement of both Haggai and Zechariah (4:24; 5:1,2; Hg 1:4-15). They then began rebuilding of the walls of the city. However, with this task they were opposed by Tattenai who was a local governor (5:3-5). It may have been that Tattenai assumed that if the walls of the city were completed, the Jews would rebel, terminate their payment of taxes, and subsequently, he would lose his job. ***Darius king of Persia:*** This was Darius I who was the king of the Medo-Persian Empire from 521 to 486 B.C. He memorialized his life with a great deal of information concerning his reign that he had written on the Behistun Inscription.

Chapter 5
TEMPLE REBUILDING RENEWED

5:1,2 ***Haggai ... Zechariah:*** Once they were discouraged, the Jews turned their focus from rebuilding the temple, to building their own lives (See Hg 1:9,10). While the temple lay in ruins, they focused on the prosperity of their own lives. But the fiery exhortations of Haggai and Zechariah had their desired effect. The people started once again to rebuild the house of God.

5:3-5 ***Tattenai:*** Opposition arose again against the building of the temple. This time it came from the governor, or satrap of the Syrian province that was under the control of the Persian king. ***Who has commanded you:*** It is questionable whether Tattenai was truly ignorant of Cyrus' decree that the building should take place, for it had been many years since the Jews had returned to the land. It was probable that his job may have been in danger if the Jews became autonomous from the Persian kingdom. He thus asked for the names of the leaders in order to incriminate them before the king. Nevertheless, regardless of the questioning of Tattenai, the Israelite leaders inspired the people to continue the reconstruction.

5:6-17 In order that he be the "eyes and ears" of Darius, Tattenai wrote the letter. The motive for writing the letter was questionable. However, in it Tattenai reassured Darius that he questioned the Jewish leadership in reference to the building project. He wanted to assert his authority, and thus reported all the answers that were given to him. ***Decree was made by Cyrus:*** One of the great administrative aspects of the Medo-Persian Empire was that it maintain respect for rule by law. If the decree of the former king was found, then Darius would respect the decree.

Chapter 6
AID FROM DARIUS

6:1-5 ***A search was made:*** The document was not found in the existing capital, but in Achmetha, the summer residence of the kings. Thus the search was thorough, for a search was made in every possible location where the document might be found. ***Expenses be paid for by the king's house:*** This was a common practice of the Persian kings. Cyrus repaired temples at Uruk and Ur. Cambyses, his successor, helped to repair the temple at Sais in Egypt. Dairus helped rebuild the temple of Amon. The support of the reconstruction of these and other temples was for the purpose of maintaining the loyalty of the people. The local people enjoyed the protection of the Medo-Persian Empire, while at the same time they enjoyed their freedom of religion.

6:6-12 The discovery of the decree that was made by Cyrus motivated Darius to make his own decree. His decree immediately stopped the opposition. However, it went beyond this. Tattenai, and those associated with him, were commanded by the king to aid in the work of the Jews. The motives of Tattenai had thus been thwarted. Instead of hindering the progress of the Jews, he was commanded to help them accomplish their work. He was even commanded to use funds from the state treasury in order that the Jews complete the work of rebuilding the temple.

TEMPLE COMPLETED & DEDICATED

6:13-18 ***And they built and finished it:*** When the opposition ceased, and the state aided in paying for much of the building, the temple was completed within five years of the decree of Darius. ***Cyrus ... Darius ... Artaxerxes:*** The first returnees left Babylonia when Cyrus was king. The temple construction was completed under the reign of Darius. Credit is here given to Artaxerxes because it was during his reign, almost 60 years after the first returnees began the construction under Zerubbabel, that Ezra was given permission to take the sacred vessels of the temple from the temple in Babylon to the newly reconstructed temple of the Lord in Jerusalem (7:1-26). ***12 male goats:*** A remnant from all twelve tribes of Israel returned to the land. This was a promise of God. The fact that a remnant of all twelve tribes returned is inferred by the offering of sacrifices for every tribe when the temple was finished (See 2:2,59,70; 3:1,11; 6:16; 7:7,28). Nowhere throughout these events, and the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, is there mention of a lost ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel. A remnant of all twelve tribes returned to Palestine in order to inaugurate altar worship and to wait for the coming of the Messiah.

6:19-22 The celebration of the Passover was to inaugurate the reconstructed temple, as well as to remind everyone of the coming of the Messiah in the future. In fact, they rebuilt the

temple under the commandment of God in order to prepare for the future. When the initial Passover was kept by the Israelites the night before they left Egyptian captivity, the soon-to-be freed captives focused on the freedom of the future. Though there were remembrances of freedom in connection with the Passover throughout their history, one of the primary focuses for keeping the feast was to direct the minds of the people to future fulfillments of the promises of God. In the case of the observance of the Passover on this occasion, the Israelites rededicated themselves to the Lord in anticipation to that which was yet to come in the history of Israel. The knew little of the freedom that would come through the Son of God.

2nd Return Under Ezra
(7:1 – 10:44)

Outline: (1) Ezra assumes leadership (7:1-10), (2) Authorization of Artaxerxes (7:11-28), (3) Listing of the returnees (8:1-14), (4) Plans for travel (8:15-30), (5) Arrival in Jerusalem (8:31-36), (6) Ezra's shock over spiritual conditions (9:1-15), (7) Repentance and reformation (10:1-17), (8) Sin with foreign wives (10:18-44)

Chapter 7
EZRA ASSUMES LEADERSHIP

There is an interlude of almost 60 years between the events of chapters 1-6 and the events that begin with chapter 7. It was during this period of time that the events of Esther took place in Babylon. Some have proposed that the ministry of Malachi also took place during this time. We must also keep in mind that the work of Ezra in leading Jews to Palestine was an exodus, not a return of captives. By adding the 60 years from the time of Zerubbabel's return to the 70 years of captivity after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, the people to whom Ezra addressed his plea had been in their areas of residence over 100 years. Ezra was leading to Israel Jews who were born in captivity and had never been to Judah. It was only a place about which their fathers and grandfathers had reminisced. He was thus leading an exodus of families, not a return of first generation captives. And considering the Jews' deliverance from their captures that took place during the time of Esther, we would assume that all Jews had settled down in their new homeland of residence in Persian territory, including all the territories that were formerly of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. Ezra's exodus, therefore, was a formidable relocation of Jewish families who had to uproot from their fathers and mothers in order to move to Palestine. Many children had to say farewell to grandfathers and grandmothers they would probably never see again. We must also consider the fact that one served as a Levite when he was thirty years old. This would mean that the Levites who were called to go on the journey had families. They grew up in the land of Persia (formerly Assyria and Babylonia) and had known no other life.

7:1-10 ***Artaxerxes:*** Or, Longim-anus, the son of Xerxes I. The territory of the Persian Empire at this time was from Egypt and Asia Minor (Turkey) in the west to the regions bordering India in the east. According to the ancient historian, Diodorus Siculus, Artaxerxes came to power when Xerxes was assassinated. Artaxerxes then murdered his own brother Darius and defeated in battle his other brother, Hystaspes, who was satrap of Bactria. Artaxerxes stopped the work of rebuilding the walls because of the opposition to the Jews in Judah (4:7-23). However, in the following chapters it is recorded that he allowed Ezra to return from exile in order to spiritually lead the people. Nehemiah served as a cupbearer to Artaxerxes in Susa (Ne 1:1). In 444 B.C. Artaxerxes commissioned Nehemiah to be the governor of Judah (Ne 2:1-6; 5:14). He also gave Nehemiah permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Ne 6:15). ***Ezra:*** In order to reaffirm the ministry of Ezra to reestablish the Levitical ministry and priesthood, Ezra was identified by his genealogy to be a direct descendant of Aaron. ***Skilled in the law ... prepared his heart to seek the law ... to teach Israel:*** These statements concerning the character and ministry of Ezra describe one who was worthy to lead in teaching the word of God. Because he loved the word of God, as a scribe he thoroughly studied the law (2 Tm 2:15). He could thus teach the word of God because he knew what he was teaching. Only those who know the word of God are qualified to be teachers (Js 3:1). Those who do not know the word of God cannot be leaders among God's people simply because they do not know where God wants His people led. ***First month ... fifth month:*** This would have been a four-month journey. ***Came to Jerusalem:*** The accepted date for this second return of Jews to Palestine is 458/57 B.C. However, because this date is determined by the return being in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes I, the date is often questioned. The reason is that there was another Artaxerxes who followed Artaxerxes I. If the return were in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II, then the return would have been in 398 B.C. However, this would make Ezra's arrival in Palestine after the return of Nehemiah in 444 B.C. For this reason, the date of 458/57 B.C. is to be preferred.

AUTHORIZATION OF ARTAXERXES

7:11-28 The nature of the decree reflects the state authority that was given into the hands of Ezra, even to the execution of the death penalty. Ezra had the authority to initiate the return, assume control of the civil status of the land, and then use state funds to accomplish his mission to rebuild the walls of the city. In order that the religious leaders be encouraged in their ministry, they were exempt from paying state taxes. Artaxerxes realized that a stable society came as a result of the work of spiritual leaders in the society. In this case, Ezra evidently did his groundwork by teaching Artaxerxes the law of God. The king thus realized the importance of the principles of God in the spiritual development of a nation. For this reason, he and other Persian kings promoted the rebuilding of the religious center of Jewish faith and the education of the people in the law of God.

Chapter 8
LISTING OF THE RETURNEES

8:1-14 In this list of names only the fathers of the families are given. There were about 1,500 men of the returning group, who with their families, could have composed a group of more

than 5,000. In the giving of names in lists as this, we must keep in mind that common names are repeated in the listings. Common names as David, Daniel, Jonathan, Joab and Zechariah, therefore, do not refer to the same person in different lists. These and other names were common Jewish names that referred to different people, depending on the time when they lived.

PLANS FOR TRAVEL

8:15-20 We would assume that the reason there was little response to Ezra's call was in the fact that the Levites were established with their families in the Persian Empire. None had ever been to Judah. They thus did not feel a need to respond to the call to assume the responsibilities of their ministry as Levites in a "foreign" land called Judah. However, Ezra immediately made another appeal. As a result, many Levites, with those of the Nethinims (temple servants), did join the exodus that would begin at the River Ahava. In doing this they were taking their families from a settled life in Persian territory to a new life in Judah, a place to which most of them had never been before. Many of their fathers and grandparents who had been taken into captivity had now died. This exodus of Ezra that took place over 100 years after the captivity would be composed of those who knew only the life in which they had grown up as children in the Babylonian, and now the Persian Empire. These Levites were the sons of those who had been taken into captivity, and thus on this return, they were journeying into unknown lands. It was an exodus from their Persian homeland, not a return to a place from which they had been taken personally as captives. We would assume, therefore, that they and their wives would be somewhat apprehensive about answering Ezra's call to uproot and take their families to Judah, a place to which they had never been before.

8:21-30 ***I proclaimed a fast:*** Those who spiritually lead people into great events lead first in focusing the minds of the people on the spiritual (See comments At 13:1-3). ***I was ashamed:*** We would assume that because he had the approval of the government of Persia that a military escort would have been sent with the exodus party. But Ezra did not request such, knowing that he had to prove to the king that God was truly with them. The fact that they made it safely to the land without being ambushed by thieves proved that God did protect them. The point was proved that God is with those who seek to do good to His glory. His hand is against those who seek to do evil. The wicked will reap what they sow.

ARRIVAL IN JERUSALEM

8:31-36 Their journey was approximately 1,500 kilometers (900 miles) from Babylon to Jerusalem. They left in the first month and arrived in Jerusalem the first of the fifth month, about a four-month journey (7:9). When the group arrived in Jerusalem, they rested for three days, and then measured over to those who kept the treasury of the temple the articles of silver and gold that they brought from Babylon. They showed great accountability for the contributions, doing everything with the witness of several people. According to the custom of the day, everything was recorded in writing.

Chapter 9

EZRA'S SHOCK OVER SPIRITUAL CONDITIONS

9:1-4 ***According to their abominations:*** It could have been that there was no copy of the law in the hands of the people who resided in Judah. At least from their listening to the reading of the law they were convicted in their hearts about the loss of the identity of Israel through intermarriage with Gentiles. It was Ezra's work to teach the people the law of God. In their ignorance of the law, they had digressed to the abominations of the remnant of Canaanites who resided in the land. In marrying foreign women, they compromised the work of God through the nation of Israel to fulfill the promises to Abraham (See Gn 12:1-3). ***Holy Seed:*** Because the resident Jews had married the Gentiles of the land, they had compromised their faith and endangered the work of God. They were falling back into a moral state their forefathers were in when God sent them into captivity. It was now a time for stringent obedience to the law of God. The life of Solomon illustrated the influence an unbelieving spouse can have on a believer. Because he had married idolatrous wives, Solomon began a history of idolatry in Israel that resulted in the captivity of the Israelite race. Ezra saw this happening again among the Jews who had returned almost 60 years before his arrival. They were marrying those of other races, and thus were being influenced by other beliefs. But more important, their intermarriage with other races was bringing to an end the Israelite nation through whom God had promised that He would bring the Redeemer into the world. ***I pulled out the hair of my head:*** This was a custom to show great grief. When great leaders see disobedience to the law of God, they are grieved in their hearts. Too often spiritual leaders become desensitized to the morally degenerate state of man, and thus are not stirred in their spirit to preach against sin.

9:5-15 In his humble prayer, Ezra confessed for his people that they had fallen into the state of sin that initially took them into the captivity of the Assyrians and Babylonians many years before. But for a brief time God was gracious, and thus allowed them to return to the land of promise. A remnant had escaped their captivity and established themselves in the land. God thus showed mercy in order that the altar and temple be rebuilt in order to reestablish the altar sacrifices. Ezra realized that the grace that God had extended to them was undeserved. His fear was that their present sin of intermarriage with the inhabitants of the land would again be their end, for they were testing God's grace. Ezra thus concluded his prayer with a request that in their sins, they stood before God needing once again the mercy of God. However, in order that mercy be extended, they needed to take action to rectify the problem.

Chapter 10

REPENTANCE & REFORMATION

10:1-4 Ezra's repentant behavior and prayer for the people had its intended impact on those who were sincere. ***There is hope in Israel:*** The hope was that there were yet in Israel those who respected the law of God. The proof of their respect for the law was in the fact that the people themselves, through Shechaniah their spokesman, suggested that a cov-

enant be made with God to put away their foreign wives. The extreme measures that were taken underscored the sincerity of the people to do that which was right. The returning remnant was all that was left to preserve a segment of society, the Israelites, in order to bring forth the fulfillment of the seedline promise that was made to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Thus the extreme measures by which the sincere Jews went must be understood in the context of their understanding concerning the responsibility of the remnant of God. The remnant had to remain racially pure in order to be identified as the people through whom God fulfilled His promises to the fathers. If Israel did not exist at the time of the coming of the Messiah, then no one could identify that the promises to the seed of Abraham had been fulfilled, for no one could identify the seed of Abraham.

10:5-17 Though opposed by only four people (vs 15), the people proceeded to carry out the plan to put away their foreign wives. The plan was by the people through the advice of Ezra, and the execution of the plan was also by the people. Ezra did not dominate them through any cult leadership. Everyone voluntarily assembled in Jerusalem within three days. What is inspiring about what happened on this occasion was that Ezra simply delivered the law of God to the people. It was the people who took action. Ezra was only the messenger of God who mourned over the sin of the people because they had violated the law of God. He then preached about the violation of the law that caused his mourning. ***Possessions ... forfeited ... separated from the assembly:*** One did not have to conform to the decision of the people to put away his foreign wife. If he did not, however, then he had no part in the remnant of true Israel. He was to be excommunicated from the assembly of true Israelites. Those who did not put away their wives, therefore, gained the resentment of the Jews, which resentment lasted even to the days of Jesus, when the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (See Jn 4:9). ***As you have said:*** Ezra only taught what the law of God said. The law did not originate from him, but from God. This statement, therefore, must be understood only in the sense that Ezra was the messenger who delivered the law of God to the people. However, not everyone conformed to the measures that were set forth in this context. Nehemiah also had to deal with the matter of marriage to foreign women (Ne 13:23-31).

SIN WITH FOREIGN WIVES

10:18-44 Even those of the priesthood had married foreign wives. The Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and many of the religious leaders had married those who would turn their focus away from the true God of Israel. Their intermarriage would assimilate Israel into the nations, and thus cause the Israelite race to vanish among the people of the world. Regardless of what had happened, there was great repentance in Israel concerning this matter. We must understand that the context here centered around the preservation of the Israelite race. It was God's purpose to preserve a remnant of Israel for the coming of the Messiah in fulfillment of all the seedline promises that were made throughout the history of Israel. If Israel did not exist when the time was fulfilled to bring forth the Messiah, then no one would believe that the promises had been fulfilled that were initially made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. If only a mixed race existed in the first century when the promises were fulfilled, then the fulfillment of the promises would not credit God to be faithful to His promises. Though the measures that were taken at this time in the history of Israel seem extreme to us, we must understand that the people to whom Ezra preached realized that the Israelite race had to be preserved in its purity in order for God to fulfill His promises. In order to understand the response of the people to Ezra's preaching of the law on this matter, one must understand the reason why God gave the law on marriage in the first place. The reason for the law that the Israelites were not to marry Gentiles was that an Israelite remnant of society had to be preserved through whom God would bring the Messiah into the world. The law was given for the preservation of a pure Israelite race in order to fulfill the promises made to Abraham. The promises could not be identified as fulfilled if no Israelite people existed through whom the Messiah could be born into the world. But when the people did put away their foreign wives, with their children, we must not assume that they consigned them to destitution. They had broken the law concerning intermarriage with Gentiles, but to break another law in reference to benevolence to others would have resulted in another sin if they did not provide for those they put away. We would thus understand the "putting away" only to the extent of not living with the foreign wives. We would not assume that they consigned them to destitution because they were put away. By putting away foreign wives, the returned Jews were thus making a commitment to God to restore the Israel of God. In restoring the Israel of God, they maintained their identity as the seed of Abraham through whom all families of the earth would be blessed by the fulfillment of God's promise of the Redeemer. If no remnant returned to identify the existence of Israel, then God's promises would be questioned.

Nehemiah

WRITER

Because much of this book is written in the first person, we assume that Nehemiah wrote the book. The composition and literary style of writing reflects one who was not as polished in writing as a scribe as Ezra. For this reason, we would discount the fact that some have assumed that Ezra wrote the book.

The name Nehemiah means "the Lord comforts." He was the son of Hacaliah of Judah, and held the promi-

nent position as a cupbearer for the king of the Medo-Persian Empire. He was later appointed by Artaxerxes I to be the governor of Judah.

As a leader, Nehemiah told the people what they did not want to know. He led them to a place where they received great resistence. He was able to do this because of his passion for the law of God, and his desire to preserve the posterity of Israel according to the law. Contemporary prophets with Nehemiah would be Ezra and Malachi. We would also assume that both Haggai and Zephaniah overlapped with the prophetic ministry of Nehemiah.

DATE

The book was possibly written after Nehemiah served as governor of Judah, and thus sometime after 430 B.C. According to the date of events that are recorded in the book, there are about thirteen years between the close of the events of Ezra and the opening of the events of Nehemiah (See 1:1; 2:1; Er 7:8; 10:9,17). What is important to remember concerning the circumstances that existed in Judah at the time of the arrival of Nehemiah was that his work as a governor took place about one hundred years after the initial return of the captives in 536 B.C. There would thus be a second generation of Jewish residents in Palestine whose grandparents and parents participated in the initial return. This also means that Nehemiah was possibly born in Babylon. It is probable that he had never been to Palestine, and thus as a leader of the Jews, was himself leading them into areas where he had never been before. It is also evident that Nehemiah, as a Jew in Medo-Persian territory away from Palestine, maintained his convictions as an Israelite. It was his passion that led him to Judea. That passion was instilled in him by his parents who reared him in captivity. It is with the same passion that evangelists today go into all the world.

DATE

Both Ezra and Nehemiah were originally two separate books. However, sometime before A.D. 100 they were composed as one book in Hebrew manuscripts. Origen (A.D. 185-253) was the first known writer to separate the two books (See intro. to Er). Both books together cover about 90 years of history.

Rebuilding The Wall
(1:1 – 6:19)

Outline: (1) Commission of Nehemiah (1:1 – 2:8), (2) Plans for building (2:9-20), (3) Completion of the work (3:1 – 6:19)

Chapter 1
COMMISSION OF NEHEMIAH

1:1-3 ***Words of Nehemiah:*** The information that is in this context could possibly have been taken from the memoirs of Nehemiah and transcribed here by another writer. For this reason, it is difficult to establish an exact date for the writing of the book. ***Twentieth year:*** This was the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes I (444 B.C.). Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign, which was 457 B.C. (Er 7:8). Though it seems that both Ezra and Nehemiah were in Jerusalem for some time together (8:9; 12:36), there is some evidence that Nehemiah actually went to Jerusalem before Ezra. Some Bible students believe that Ezra actually began his ministry much later, during the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes II, which would be 398 B.C. ***Shushan:*** Or, Susa. This was the winter capital of the Medo-Persian Empire. ***Hanani ... came:*** A delegation of men came from Judah who approached Nehemiah. It could be that Hanani was a brother of Nehemiah. If this is true, then we cannot discount the possibility that Nehemiah was actually born in Judah, and later migrated to the Persian capital. ***Left from the captivity:*** These would be those who were left in the land of Palestine by Nebuchadnezzar after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. We must also keep in mind that the first returnees of about 50,000 left for Judah 92 years before Nehemiah encounters this delegation from Judah, and subsequently leads another group of returnees. Since the initial return by Zerubbabel, Ezra had led a group back in 457 B.C. It it more likely that Nehemiah was born in exile, but was still sincere about his Jewish heritage and faith. ***Great distress and reproach:*** The residents of Judah were suffering the persecution of the Samaritans of the land. They were marginalized in every way because they were a conquered people from both the Assyrians and Babylonians many years before. ***Wall ... broken down:*** The first returnees under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and the second under Ezra, repaired the temple. But because of discouragement, they terminated reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem (See Er 4:7-23). The existence of a temple manifested the religious identity of a people in those days. And thus, when the temple was completed, the initial returnees assumed that their identity as a religious group of the world had been restored.

1:4-11 ***I sat down and wept:*** Herein is revealed the passion of Nehemiah for his homeland, though it is possible that he had never been there before. He mourned, fasted, confessed and prayed for many days. ***Fasted:*** Those who are passionate for the work of God will fast. Their fasting is an indication of the sincerity of their prayers (See comments At 13:1-3). ***Who keeps Your covenant:*** It was not that God broke the covenant. It was the people with whom God made the covenant who broke the conditions for maintaining the covenant. ***Not kept the commandments:*** When God establishes a covenant with men, men must keep the conditions of the covenant in order to receive the promises of the covenant. Every covenant that God establishes with man involves obedience on the part of man. Those conditions of obedience are established by God,

not man. ***But if you turn to Me:*** If they broke the covenant, God had said that they would be scattered among the nations. This had taken place in the history of Israel since the time before the Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. But God also promised that if they repented in the land of their captors, He would bring them again into their land of promise. An initial group of returnees had reaped the benefit of returning under the reign of Cyrus in 536 B.C., and a second group in 457 B.C. At this time Nehemiah sought to do the same. From the time he heard the news of the conditions in Judah, to the time of his departure, three to four months had transpired. ***Make Your servant prosper:*** Nehemiah uttered the prayer and endured the fasting. But he also stood up and took the challenge. He prayed and took action. Fasting and praying lays a burden on the heart of the one who fasts and prays with intensity. Passionate fasting and prayer always ends with action in the life of the one who is sincere about the work of God (See At 13:1-3). ***Cupbearer:*** Nehemiah introduced himself as one who was in a prominent position in the king's court in Persia. As a cupbearer to the king, it was his responsibility to drink some of the king's wine before the king partook in order to see if it was poisoned. Some cupbearers also had official status in that they functioned as representatives for the king. In the case of Nehemiah, he was appointed as a governor to represent the Persian king in Judah.

Chapter 2

2:1-8 ***Nisan:*** This was the first month of the Jewish year. This is the Aramaic name for the Hebrew name, Abib. This would be March/April. ***I had not been sad before:*** When one was before the king he was always to show a spirit of cheer and joy. But on this occasion, Nehemiah could not present himself in his usual joyful demeanor because of the lengthy mourning, fasting and praying he had experienced for Jerusalem. ***I took up the wine:*** Some have suggested that there were several cupbearers who served before the king in different shifts. At the time he first heard the news from Judah, it was not Nehemiah's shift to serve before the king. When his shift came, it was too soon after his mourning, fasting and praying to present himself in the proper manner. This would answer the reason why the king was not informed concerning Nehemiah's passion for Jerusalem for three to four months after Nehemiah encountered the delegation from Jerusalem. ***Send me:*** Most seek for others to send on a mission for God, but Nehemiah stands forth as the one to be sent. Though he initially feared when the king discovered his sadness in his presence, the king's favor, with the presence of the queen, motivated Nehemiah to seek the support of the king in reference to changing the conditions of Jerusalem. And thus, as the Lord stirred the spirit of Cyrus to allow the first exiles to return (Er 1:1), so it could have been that the Lord did the same with Artaxerxes I in answer to the prayer of Nehemiah. ***I gave him a time:*** Nehemiah's first term in Judah was 12 years (5:14), after which he returned to Artaxerxes, and then went back to Judah (13:6,7). The first mission trip was not short. He left his family, friends and homeland in Shushan in order to go on an extended mission to Judea. He did not have a furlough for 12 years. ***Governors beyond the River:*** These were the Persian-appointed governors who served in the western territories of the Empire. On his way to Judah, Nehemiah would pass through the jurisdiction of several governors of the Persian Empire. He thus sought letters of authority that would allow him to pass unhindered and unquestioned. He did not want anyone to know what his mission was in reference to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The permission to rebuild the walls that was given to Nehemiah was a reversal of the Persian king's decree that was made during the time of Ezra (Er 4:21). In the former decree to stop the building of the walls, Artaxerxes had stated that the building should be stopped until another decree was made by him. Nehemiah's authorization, therefore, was the other decree, which decree gave Nehemiah authority to build the walls. What is significant is the fact that Artaxerxes had great confidence in Nehemiah, that he was not going to lead a rebellion against the Medo-Persian Empire. ***The good hand of my God upon me:*** Nehemiah gave all credit for his success to God who was working through him.

PLANS FOR BUILDING

2:9,10 ***Sanballat ... Tobiah:*** Sanballat was the governor of Samaria at the time Nehemiah was in Judah. His name is mentioned in a papyrus letter that was written from Elephantine in Egypt. The Tobiah family was a very influential family in the Palestine area during the time of Nehemiah. Unto the 2nd century, they maintained their influence throughout the region. Tobiah was evidently a wealthy landowner and aristocrat of the time, and thus had great influence throughout the region. The third individual that opposed Nehemiah's work was Geshem, a prominent Arab leader (vs 19; 6:1,2,6). Sanballat and Tobiah represented the Samaritans and Geshem represented the Arabs. These two cultures of people were against anything that would advance the cause of the Jews. Geshem too was a very influential person in the region, and thus put his influence behind Sanballat and Tobiah to squash anything that the Jews attempted. The names of these three people are mentioned on several archaeological artifacts, including the writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus. ***Captains of the army and horsemen:*** Ezra had previously refused government protection on his exodus movement several years before (Er 8:22). But Nehemiah had special letters of authority from the government of Persia. He was not carrying with him a great amount of silver and gold as was Ezra. Ezra took all the articles of the temple back with him on his journey. ***It grieved them exceedingly:*** The Bible historian must keep in mind that the events of Esther's deliverance as the queen of the Persian Empire took place before the historical events of Nehemiah. In that deliverance the Jews throughout the Persian Empire were given authority by the Persian king to defend themselves against any who would seek to commit genocide against them (Et 8,9). The result was that the enemies of the Jews throughout the Medo-Persian Empire were overcome by the Jews. It seems that by the time of Nehemiah's arrival in Palestine, the local people were still suffering from their humiliation that resulted from the Jews' defending themselves against their enemies throughout the Empire (See comments of Et).

2:11-16 ***I did not tell anyone:*** Nehemiah was aware of the hostility of the local residents against any ambitions of the Jews. He thus kept his initial plans secret until he had made a plan for rebuilding. ***The rulers did not know:*** Those who eventually resisted the efforts of Nehemiah were actually influential rulers in the region. Though Nehemiah was working under the authority of the Persian king, the local rulers of the Empire were working against him. These local rulers had exerted so much pressure on the local Jews who originated from the returnees who had come to Judah 90 years before Nehemiah, and those who came with Ezra, that they were discouraged. They had since terminated any rebuilding efforts of the city of Jerusalem. They had the desire, but lacked the leadership that would lead them against the official rulers of the region. With the coming of Nehemiah, however, a new leadership had arrived with the authority of the Persian king. Nehemiah was an astringent leader, and thus the type of leader that was needed for the times.

2:17-20 ***The hand of my God that was good upon me:*** In order for God's leaders to be strong leaders, they must firmly and passionately believe that God is working in their lives. Nehemiah had seen no miracles, nor seen any visions. He had not experienced the presence of any angels. Nevertheless, he had the great faith that was needed to do a work for God that was against the powers that existed in Palestine at the time of his arrival (See comments Rm 8:28-37). ***Let us rise up and build:*** The presence of leadership that radiated from him moved the people. The people rose up at the exhortation of Nehemiah and began to build. They did so because of their desire to work for God. The faith of Nehemiah was the spark of encouragement that they needed to begin the work. ***Mocked us to scorn:*** The opposition to the work of God first came by mocking. Through mocking, the enemies of God seek to embarrass those who are doing the work. Mocking of one's work, therefore, is often evidence that one is doing the right thing. If one is not confident that his work is of God, then mocking will quickly cause one to terminate his efforts. ***The God of heaven, He will prosper us:*** The answer to mocking is to be reassured that God is working for one to complete his task. Nehemiah's confidence to do the work of God resulted from his knowledge of the will of God for Israel. ***You have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem:*** As in Ezra's refusal to allow Gentiles to participate in that which was assigned only to the Israelites (Er 4:2), so Nehemiah here reaffirms that what he and the Jews were doing was for Israel, not the Gentiles. His focus was to preserve the heritage of Israel for the coming of the Messiah. No Gentile who was not a proselyte could help preserve this Israelite heritage.

Chapter 3
COMPLETION OF THE WORK

3:1-32 ***The priests:*** The spiritual leaders led in the work of rebuilding. They were not the type of spiritual leaders who refused to get their hands dirty. What is significant about the building of the wall was the organization by which it was carried out, and the fact that everyone had a specific section of the wall he was to repair. They all worked on the same project, but in their designated areas of work. In their assigned locations of the wall to repair, they were to begin with that section of the wall that was nearest their house (See vss 10,23,28-30). Their impetus for repairing the wall, therefore, began by each family assuming their responsibility to secure their own houses by building that portion of the wall that was nearest their home. In this chapter, those who are mentioned are identified as those who were loyal to the project. In the years to come, the families who descended from these initial builders would know that their fathers had been loyal to the project of rebuilding the walls. It was possibly the objective of the Holy Spirit in mentioning these names, to inform the descendants and all Jews of the dedicated work of those who were loyal to the rebuilding project. ***But their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work:*** The repairs were led by Nehemiah, the priests and the people. However, those who felt themselves too good to be involved in manual labor refrained from the work. The nobles had thus set themselves aside, and thus disqualified themselves before God because they did not do the work. The mention of the inaction of the nobles verifies the truth that God seeks those who will put their hands to the work and work in cooperation with all who are laboring for His glory. ***Official seat of the governor:*** Since Nehemiah was now governor of Judah, the repairs took place under the authority of the Persian king. ***Nehemiah the son of Azbuk:*** This was not Nehemiah the governor, whose actions are revealed in this book. ***Ruler of half the district of Jerusalem:*** Jerusalem proper was divided into different areas over which specific rulers were assigned authority (See vss 9,12,15-18). ***Gate:*** Very little remains today of the walls that were rebuilt in Jerusalem by Nehemiah's fellow workers. Small portions of a wall have been discovered west of the present temple area that possibly date back to the time of Hezekiah (2 Ch 32:5). The construction of the temple by Herod the Great prior to the coming of Jesus was a reconstruction of much of the site where Nehemiah reconstructed the wall. By the time of Herod, the city had far outgrown the geographical size of the city that existed at the time of Nehemiah.

Chapter 4

4:1-3 ***Sanballat ... was furious and very angry:*** Sanballat surely saw the efforts of the Jews as an attack against his authority, and possibly his economic status. It at least stirred up his prejudice against the Jews. His statements in verse 2 indicate that he had little regard for the Jews. He was suspicious of anything they did that would suggest a rebellion. He had little regard for their beliefs, and thus could not understand their dedication for preserving the heritage of Israel. At this time in the rebuilding project, it seems that he was about to muster the army of Samaria in order to join his mockery of the Jews. At least he was using the army as a threat to the Jews.

4:4,5 ***Give them up for plunder:*** The interjection of Nehemiah's imprecatory prayer is a plea to God for relief from opposition. As many of the imprecatory Psalms, the judgment of God is called upon by the one uttering the prayer. In this case, Nehemiah calls on God to bring down judgment immediately on those who mocked and discouraged his work.

4:6-9 ***The people had a mind to work:*** The people's answer to the mockery of Sanballat and his friends was to continue to work. If one is focused on the work of God, his mind is kept off the slanderous words of those who would mock him in God's work. ***All of them conspired together:*** Since mockery did not stop the work of the Jews, then their enemies escalated their attack by conspiring against them. ***We made our prayer to our God:*** This is the answer to both mockery and conspiracy. Since the people had a mind to work, they would not be detoured from the objective that Nehemiah had set before them. He knew how to organize the people for work, and he knew how to agonize under the threat of opposition. Such personal characteristics make for a great leader.

4:10-12 There was talk among the enemies of an outright attack against the Jews. Though carrying out such an attack would have been contrary to the decree of the king of Persia, they at least made a plan to attack. But when such a plan became known to the Jews, the Jews did not deter from the work.

4:13,14 Regardless of knowing that the good hand of God was for him, Nehemiah took every precaution against the possibility of an attack from the army of Samaria. Our faith, therefore, must not move us to do foolish things. And in this case, not making plans for defense would have been foolish. Faith does not discount wisdom. ***Do not be afraid of them***: But some were afraid, thus necessitating the exhortation of Nehemiah to be courageous. Nehemiah's leadership was characterized by prayer, being watchful for the work of Satan, encouragement of those who were engaged in the work, and taking up arms for defense. We would assume that the king of Persia saw all these leadership characteristics in Nehemiah before he commissioned him to go to Judah.

4:15-23 Nehemiah's defensive organization was skillfully carried out. Families were to protect one another. Work was to continue, but the workers were to arm themselves. The best way to divert conflict is a show of strength. Nehemiah did not want the enemies of Israel to think that they were unprepared to defend themselves by use of swords and spears. Nehemiah ordered the Jews of the surrounding regions to come to Jerusalem in order to defend the workers. The work was so intense that the workers labored and slept in their clothes. They were constantly ready for work or defense. The atmosphere was thus tense, for they worked under the threat of attack. What they did in reference to accomplish their task explains the mind to work that they had. God accomplishes great things through those who are determined to work for His causes. But He can do little through those who are easily discouraged.

Chapter 5

5:1-5 The social problem that Nehemiah encountered was that the wealthier Jews were taking advantage of their fellow Jews. There was a famine in the land, and subsequently some of the Jews had put themselves in debt in order to pay their taxes. Some had to give themselves as servants to their fellow Jews because they had borrowed from them in order to pay their taxes. Because of their greed, the wealthier Jews were using a time of distress as an opportunity to exploit their fellow Jews. This practice did not stop at this time in history. The culture of the rich Sadducean Jews originated sometime in the years after Nehemiah and was present at the time of the ministry of Jesus (See intro. to Js.)

5:6-13 ***Exacting usury:*** Or, interest. They were charging interest on loans from fellow Jews, which thing was contrary to the law (Ex 22:25; Dt 23:19,20). Being a person who was leading the people in difficult times, the natural reaction of Nehemiah against such greed would be anger. ***Consulted with myself:*** Before he let it be known what he thought, Nehemiah carefully thought over the matter. In his discretion, he knew that a stern rebuke was needed in order to correct the injustice. He thus thought about what and how he would say that which needed to be said. He reminded the nobles and wealthier Jews that he had not exacted pay from them as the official governor of the land. He had a right to require taxes from them as a representative of the king of Persia, but he did not demand their money. ***This very day:*** Nehemiah did not give them time for cancelling the debts. He demanded that all such debts be cancelled immediately. This they did since they had no answer to his argument that he had not assumed his right to exact payment from them as the governor of Judah. ***Hundredth part:*** They were not only to restore their lands and houses, but also the one percent monthly interest that they had charged. ***We will restore:*** We would assume that if they did not restore what they had loaned to their fellow Jews, then Nehemiah would exact tax from them for what they owed him. ***Shook out the front of my garment:*** This was a symbolic gesture to manifest disgust and repudiation (Compare 1 Kg 22:11; Jr 27:2; 28:10; Mt 10:14; At 13:51; 18:6).

5:14-19 ***Not eaten the bread of the governor:*** Everyone knew that Nehemiah had not taken that which he deserved as the appointed governor of Judah. The supplying of his own needs was an example to the rest that they should not take advantage of others for the sake of gain (See comments At 20:33-35).

Chapter 6

6:1-3 ***Come, let us meet together:*** Though in this case they thought to do harm to Nehemiah, one would do well to review the exhortation that Paul gave to Titus concerning meetings with those who have evil motives (See comments Ti 3:9-11). In this case, the mocking did not stop the Jews' work on the wall. Conspiracy did not stop the work. The threat of a military attack did not stop the work. So Sanballat and Geshem moved to take out the leader, that is, Nehemiah. When there are meetings called by those who oppose the work of God, the first thing God's leaders must determine is if the meeting is for edification or destruction. If it is known that those who call the meeting oppose the work of God, then God's leaders should not show up at the meeting. Such meetings, as Paul wrote to Titus, encourage confrontation and division over matters of no consequence. They intimidate the righteous to conform to the wishes of the disgruntled. Such meetings should never be called in the first place. The fact that such meetings are called by those who oppose the work of God should alert the

righteous that evil men have unrighteous motives for having such meetings. ***I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down:*** This is the reply of a righteous leader to those religious leaders who have evil motives for conducting destructive meetings. One should be so involved in the work of God that he does not have time for meetings that involve those who are either jealous or have religious politics at heart. The fact that one refuses to participate in destructive meetings is not to say that he is divisive. It simply reveals that the righteous worker has enough sense to determine what is a destructive meeting, and thus stays involved in the work and away from those who seek to do him harm. Every meeting that Christians have should be for exhortation and encouragement (See comments 1 Co 14; Hb 10:24,25).

6:4-9 ***They sent to me four times:*** Satan will be persistent in organizing an occasion for destruction. Those with political motives will not take no for an answer, and thus will be persistent in trying to engage the righteous in meetings wherein they can intimidate those who are involved in the work of God. ***Open letter:*** Letters are usually drawn up by those who seek to promote their evil agendas. In this case, the letter was to intimidate Nehemiah. But God's leaders will not be intimidated by the actions of wicked men. Their wickedness is manifested in their desires to have harmful meetings and in writing letters that slander the righteous. ***It is reported:*** In order to intimidate Nehemiah, Sanballat and his cohorts resorted to slander. Slander is speaking evil of another with the intent of destroying the reputation of another (See comments 3 Jn 9,10). ***You are inventing them:*** Nehemiah's reply to Sanballat was direct. He essentially called him a slanderous liar. ***Now it will be reported to the king:*** The threat of Sanballat was to send the slanderous letter to the king of Persia. It is a common practice of those who are political in their motives to slander the righteous before either the public or kings in order to intimidate the righteous to conform to their desires. They will publicly report that they sought a meeting, but the ones to whom they sought to do harm refused to meet with them. They unknowingly reveal their arrogance by publicly proclaiming that all with whom they disagree should meet with them for the sake of unity. And in their meetings, they argue with the righteous that they conform to their desires for the sake of unity. But when one is intimidated to conform to the desires of those with whom he may disagree concerning the work of God in the area of opinion, then the righteous sin. As in the case of Nehemiah and the Jews, they were doing the work of God. They would not be intimidated into terminating their work in order to have unity with those whose motives were political. ***Trying to make us afraid:*** Or, they were trying to intimidate them into stopping their work. But the confidence of Nehemiah prevailed. He knew that he had the sanction of the king of Persia, and thus Sanballat's letter to the king would avail nothing. Nehemiah personally knew the king, for he was the king's cupbearer, and the king knew him. When one knows that he is working for King Jesus, no unrighteous person who poses to be a believer should be able to intimidate those who know their King (See comments 2 Tm 1:12; 2:19).

6:10-14 ***Shemaiah ... a secret informer:*** It was possible that Shemaiah wanted Nehemiah to go into the inner chambers of the temple where only the priests were allowed to go (Nm 18:7). If Nehemiah went into this part of the temple, accusation could be made against him (See 2 Ch 26:16-23). A leader who is the head of state, but also seeks to be the religious leader of the people, is setting himself up to be a god of the people. If Nehemiah acted on the advice of Shemaiah, there would have been just accusation against him. ***Should such a man as I flee:*** Those who would be leaders of God's people must understand that there is a cross to bear, and a death they must possibly face (See comments Lk 14:25-35; Rv 2:10). If they are not willing to bear their cross, then they are not men such as Nehemiah (Compare Mk 10:35-39). And few there are who are of such a nature. There are many who want to be leaders, but few who are willing to carry the burden of persecution (See comments At 14:22). ***Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him:*** The word of hirelings must always be questioned. When in times of distress and famine, as the times were when these events occurred, the motives of hirelings are usually to preserve their means of support. Nehemiah recognized that the motives of Shemaiah were unrighteous because he was seeking to secure his support by luring him into doing that which was contrary to the law of God. ***The rest of the prophets:*** It seems that there were several preachers on the payroll of men like Tobiah and Sanballat. They too were seeking to stop the work of God. However, Nehemiah was a leader who was willing and able to stand alone against the majority. When one understands his destiny from God, then the opposition of the majority should have no bearing on his work.

6:15-19 Regardless of all the opposition, Nehemiah and those faithful people who were working with him, accomplished their goal. ***Enemies ... were very disheartened:*** They were disheartened because they knew that under great opposition the Jews had accomplished the work. And if they were so determined to complete the work of rebuilding the walls under such opposition, then there was no way that they were going away. The Jews were there to stay, and the completion of the walls of Jerusalem was a statement to all the nations that they were there to stay. It is possible that the nations knew that if the Jews stayed, they would threaten their economic status in the area, for the Jews were very effective in their productivity. Under the direction of Nehemiah they had sorted out the problem of charging interest from one another. Now they would again work as a united group in order to become economically strong in the region. Tobiah sent letters: Though the walls were completed, the threats continued. God's workers must always be vigilant in reference to those who oppose the work of God. Later, Tobiah, in the absence of Nehemiah, was allowed to take up residence in the temple area (13:4-7).

Reforms And Resistance
(7:1 – 13:31)

Outline: (1) Reorganization (7:1-73), (2) Restoration (8:1 – 10:39), (3) Repopulation (11:1 – 12:26), (4) Rededication (12:27-43), (5) Reforms (12:44 – 13:31)

Chapter 7
REORGANIZATION

7:1-3 ***Hanani:*** This brother of Nehemiah, who had first reported concerning the conditions of Jerusalem (1:2,3), and subsequently returned with Nehemiah, was put in charge of the city. ***A faithful man:*** When men are faithful, they can be used by God for great things. Because of their faithfulness, people assume that they are trustworthy (1 Tm 1:12). People will follow trustworthy leaders, for they know that the leader will be there when he is needed.

7:4-73 ***The people in it were few:*** From the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., to the time of Nehemiah, the city of Jerusalem had been depopulated. The approximately fifty thousand returnees who came with Zerubbabel on the first return in 536 B.C. settled primarily in the rural areas of Palestine. The few thousand who came with Ezra in 457 B.C. settled in Jerusalem and the immediate area. Because of the small population in the city, special measures were taken in order to make those in the city safe. Thus the gates were closed at night, and not opened until everyone was up and alert in the morning. ***Might be registered by genealogy:*** Nehemiah planned to repopulate the city. However, in order to do this, he first wanted to make sure that those who lived in the city were true Jews. Again, he gave credit to God for his plans. With everything, Nehemiah gave credit to God who had put it in his heart to accomplish any task in reference to the reestablishment of Israel in Palestine. We assume, therefore, that he thoroughly realized the purpose for the repopulation of the land and the reestablishment of the Israelite nation. In order for the promises concerning the Messiah to be recognized as fulfilled through Israel, Israel had to exist as a nation when the Messiah came. And in order for Israel to exist as a nation, both Ezra and Nehemiah were very strict concerning the racial purity of the Jews. ***Register of the genealogy:*** Except for minor variations, this registration of returnees is the same as that which is given in Ezra 2. It is a registration of those who came to the land under the leadership of Zerubbabel approximately 92 years before Nehemiah. Some have suggested that the variations in the lists may be that the Ezra 2 list was the original list that was made in Babylon before the returnees left for Palestine. The one given here was probably the final list of those who actually arrived in the land, and thus included corrections. ***All Israel dwelt in their cities:*** This finalizing statement of verse 73 indicates that the vision of resettlement had been accomplished. The temple had been rebuilt under the leadership of Ezra. The city of Jerusalem was considered rebuilt by the completion of the walls. The Persians had willingly commissioned the work of both Ezra and Nehemiah in order to make Jerusalem an official city of authority for the Persian Empire. Persia had put down an Egyptian revolt in 460 B.C., and thus Jerusalem functioned as an official outpost of authority to those peoples who were south of Jerusalem, but at the time, under the control of the Persian Empire. The Persians viewed the Israelites as a people who were governed by a priestly system, as well as local governors (See Hg 1:1,14; Zc 4). Such a governing system was less threatening to Persia than the common rule of a king. In the history of Israel after the period of exile, the rule of the priests became dominant, and subsequently had become the primary system of control by the time of Jesus. Herod the Great was a king, but he was only a vassal of the Roman Empire at the time, for Rome occupied Palestine when Jesus was born.

Chapter 8
RESTORATION

8:1-8 ***Bring the book of the law:*** Chapters 8 & 9 are a record of great revival and restoration among the Jews. In order to have such a restoration, all the people must resort to the word of God. The word of God is always the foundation upon which revival or restoration can be accomplished. Revival to God on any other foundation leads people away from the commandments of God. Revivals that are based on the emotions of people, are led by the uncertainty of emotional changes. Revivals that are based on dynamic individuals, dispel after the death of the individual, or at least circle around and become that from which the original leader led the people. They do so when the followers canonize the teachings of the primary personality of the revival. Therefore, true revivals are identified as such when people turn their focus to the reading and understanding of the word of God. ***Law of Moses:*** Nehemiah used the terms "law of Moses" and "law of God" to refer to the same law. In verse 1, the people *"told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded Israel."* However, in verse 8, it says that *"they read distinctly in the books"*—the same book as verse 1—*"from the law of God ...."* Again in verse 18 it is recorded that Ezra *"read in the book of the law of God."* Nehemiah, therefore, used the terms "law of Moses" and "law of God" to refer to the law *"which the Lord had commanded Israel"* (vs 1). There were not two separate books of law given to Israel, one moral and the other ceremonial. There was only one book of law given which was referred to with different terms or phrases. The reason the phrase "law of Moses" is used is simply because the "law of God" was revealed through Moses. Moses never claimed to give any law to Israel that originated from himself. He was only the mediator through whom the law of God was given. In other words, the law of God was given to Israel through Moses, and thus, the law originated from Moses to whom it had been given by God. ***Ezra:*** Prior to this event, Ezra had been teaching the people the word of God. He had been laying the ground work for what happened at this time in the history of the returnees. ***Ezra opened the book:*** That is, he unrolled the scroll, for books with pages did not exist at this time in the history of the world. ***The people stood up:*** Since there existed at this time in history only a few copies of the law, the people greatly cherished hearing the words of God. They stood up in respect of the word. They lifted their hands in praise. They bowed their heads and worshiped because they were moved by what they heard. ***Caused the people to understand:*** We must keep in mind that those who returned from captivity were second and third generation Jews, and thus spoke Aramaic, the language of their captors. This would have been particularly true of those Jews who re-

turned with Ezra and Nehemiah. Aramaic was the official language of the Persian Empire, and thus those Jews who lived in Babylon spoke this language, which language they brought with them from Babylon. Their forefathers were taken into captivity on or before 586 B.C. Ezra's return was in 457 B.C. and Nehemiah's in 444 B.C. This was a period of well over one hundred years. When Ezra read the law on this occasion, he read it in the Hebrew language, the language in which the law was written. However, most of the people who listened, particularly the younger generation, spoke Aramaic as their first language, and Hebrew as their second.

8:9-12 ***All the people wept:*** They wept because they realized that their forefathers, and themselves as a result, had suffered so much because of their disobedience to the word of God. The glory of the Israelite nation had long passed because of the idolatry of the fathers. ***Do not mourn:*** Nehemiah's encouragement was that they stood at a time of repentance, and thus it was a time of rejoicing. They must forget the past and move on to the future. His was a message of hope for the future. ***The joy of the Lord is your strength:*** And how true this is. People who are filled with the joy of the Lord understand the grace of God (See Is 41:18; Jn 4:14). Their joy was based on the fact that they realized that they were forgiven. True joy, therefore, is based on mourning over our past sins, understanding God's forgiving grace, and obedience to the word of God. It is not based on the social environment in which one lives (See Ph 4:4). ***All the people ... rejoiced greatly:*** The reading of the law gave the people direction. Nehemiah's words sparked a message of hope that was based on their repentance. By understanding the mercy and grace of God in reference to their idolatrous past, the people revived in their spirit and rejoiced. Their repentance was evidenced by their keeping of the feasts that are described in this and the following chapters.

8:13-18 ***Dwell in booths:*** This was the feast of tabernacles (See Lv 23:40-43). The text indicates that this feast had not been observed in this manner since the days of Joshua who lived and led Israel in the conquest of the land about one thousand years before. ***Read in the book:*** From the first day of the feast to the last, for seven days, they read from the law. It was a lectureship where only God spoke through the reading of the law (See comments 1 Tm 4:13).

Chapter 9

9:1-4 ***Read ... confessed ... worshiped:*** In order to prevent doing what their fathers did, they were committed to being directed by the word of God. Their commitment was manifested by their confession. And their confession was declared sincere by their worship. From the time of Solomon, who introduced idolatry into Israel as a ruling king, to the time of the carrying away of the captives by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., idolatry had been a part of the culture of Israel. But from the time of the revival of Ezra and Nehemiah forward, the people committed themselves to never again be involved in the practice of idolatry. For this reason they put away the foreign women they had married (Er 10).

9:5-8 Their confession began with a recognition of God's covenant that He made with Abraham. God had promised that from Abraham a great nation would come. The Jews' rededication to God and the covenant was made here in order that the remnant be the restored nation of Israel through whom God would bring the Messiah into the world. Throughout their history God was faithful to His promise. Now it was time for Israel to be faithful.

9:9-15 God's faithfulness to Israel was not just in words, but in action. He delivered them from the bondage of Egypt. He protected them from the army of the Egyptians. He provided for them in the wilderness. He guided them by giving them the law at Mt. Sinai. They thus had no excuse for the apostasy that later followed in the history of Israel. ***By the hand of Moses:*** This text explains how God delivered His law to the Jews. The law originated with God. It was delivered only to Israel through Moses. Nehemiah 9:13,14 made this clear when Nehemiah said that God came down on Mt. Sinai and gave Israel the commandments "by the hand of Moses Your servant." From what Nehemiah stated in this passage, it is easy to understand that the law of God that was given to the Jews is referred to as the law of Moses, only because it was given to the Jews through Moses. The ten commandments, as well as all the Old Testament law, came through Moses (Ex 20:12; Mk 7:10). The Old Testament law was *"spoken through angels"* (Hb 2:2), but it was *"appointed through angels in the hand of a mediator"* (At 7:53; Gl 3:19). That mediator was Moses. It is called the "law of Moses" simply because it was given to Israel through Moses.

9:16-21 Regardless of God's care, they hardened their hearts by refusing to submit in response to His care. At Mt. Sinai they rebelled and sought to return to Egypt. Though at that time in the history of Israel God was willing to destroy the entire nation and start again with the heritage of Moses, through the intercession of Moses, God was merciful. Though they deserved retribution, God gave manna and water to them in order to preserve them from the harshness of the wilderness to which they were condemned for forty years of wandering.

9:22-25 God was faithful to give them the land of promise in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. He thus strengthened them in order to expel the Canaanites from the land. They subdued and possessed the land, which land brought forth abundantly. It was not only a land rich in productivity, but also a land that was the trade route of the nations to the north of them and Africa to the south. They had the opportunity to speak of the wonders of God to passing traders, but instead, they gave themselves over to idolatry and became as the nations. When they became fat in the goodness of His blessings, they turned from God, and thus gave up an opportunity to teach the world of the one true and living God who had blessed them. Instead of teaching the greatness of the one God, they blasphemed His name among the nations.

9:26-31 Regardless of God's blessings, they were disobedient. God's system of punishment to continually bring forth repentance in their lives was to deliver them into the hands of their enemies. Throughout their time of rebellion, therefore, they were brought under the bondage of their enemies, under which bondage they repented. They were subsequently

restored, but again returned to a life of rebellion. This cycle of rebellion, bondage, repentance and deliverance carried on throughout their history until the last deliverance into the bondage of the Babylonians. Their existence in the land of promise at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah was evidence that God had not turned His back on His people. They were back in the land, but only as a remnant. Nevertheless, they were at this time a remnant that was committed to rebuilding the nation of Israel.

9:32-38 These final words of their confession revealed their commitment to start anew as a nation. They were willing to do that which was right in order to restore themselves as the people of God. Though they had sinned in the past, they committed themselves to the future by calling on God's help to deliver them from their present enemies. As God had delivered them from those who brought them into bondage in the past, so they were asking for His deliverance from the economic bondage which they were in at the time of this revival. In order to make their commitment to be obedient to God, they made a covenant. It was written and sealed by the leaders. The making of this covenant was a result of their initiative. It was not a commandment of God. When we thus seek to restore ourselves to God, it is right for the repentant to make a covenant of faithfulness to the will of God.

Chapter 10

10:1-27 The names of the leaders who sealed the covenant for the people were here given for the posterity of Israel to come. It was a document that was verified, and thus the fathers were here binding their children to an agreement with God to remain faithful to the word of God. By placing their names on the covenant of loyalty, the leaders were placing themselves under an oath to God. The oath was binding as the law of God, and thus was not to be taken lightly.

10:28-39 There were several things that the people bound on themselves as a part of the oath of the covenant. In order to preserve the purity of the Israelite race, they would not intermarry with those of other nations. As a nation, they promised to honor the Sabbath that was given as sign of the covenant that God had made with them at Mt. Sinai. In order to maintain the temple, the symbol of their spiritual connection with God, they promised to pay the tabernacle tax that was required by the law. They made a commitment to provide wood in order that the altar sacrifices continue (See Lv 6:12,13). They also promised to continually support their spiritual leaders who ministered before the Lord on their behalf (See 10:37; 13:10,12; Nm 18:21-24). In order to financially make all this possible, they renewed their commitment to pay their tithes and give the firstfruits of their crops. The firstborn of their livestock and sons were also committed to the Lord. ***The Sabbath:*** Since the keeping of the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between God and Israel, in this context they made a renewed commitment to honor it. By the time of the Romans, the Romans considered the Jews lazy because they kept the Sabbath. The Sabbath rest was a weekly holiday that was kept only by the Jews. ***We will not neglect the house of our God:*** There was certainly a spiritual connotation to this promise in view of the context of the oath that the people were making to God. Their neglect of the temple in the past was a manifestation of their rebellion against God. Their commitment to God in the future, therefore, would be manifested by their maintenance of the physical structure of the temple. However, their focus was not on the physical structure alone, but on their commitment to be obedient to God, and thus be the spiritual house of God (See comments 1 Tm 3:15).

Chapter 11

REPOPULATION

11:1,2 ***Leaders:*** Most of the priests and Levites dwelt in Jerusalem. The remainder of the people lived in the small towns, villages and farms of Judah. However, it seems that Nehemiah wanted to have a representative of each family living in Jerusalem. The wisdom behind this was that through those living in Jerusalem, communication with their families in the other towns, villages and farms could be maintained. Nehemiah did not want the urban population of Jerusalem to separate itself from the rest of the population. This had happened in the history of Israel before their captivity, and he did not want it to happen again.

11:3-36 The remainder of chapter 11 is a register of the heads of the families who would live in Jerusalem. We would assume that most did not live within the walls of the city, but in the outlying farms and villages that surrounded Jerusalem. ***Outside work of the house of God:*** In some translations this is rendered "outward business" (11:16). ***The principal to begin the thanksgiving:*** This was the leader who began the prayers of thanksgiving. ***Nethinims:*** These were the temple servants. ***The king's deputy:*** This was the official representative of the king of Persia.

Chapter 12

12:1-26 The listing of names in these verses is a continuation of the list of the previous chapter. In this listing emphasis is on the descendants of the priests and Levites who originally went to Jerusalem in the exodus led by Zerubbabel that took place over 90 years before the ministry of Nehemiah. As with all such listings, the function of the list was to register the names in order to establish the identity of the true Israelites. We must keep in mind that the century from the time of Zerubbabel to Nehemiah was a period of time for the new beginning for Israel. The Jews had lost their identity as a nation in the promised land because of the captivities. With the decree of Cyrus to allow the rebuilding of the temple, Israel was on a quest to identify its existence as the people of God in Palestine, and thus the chosen people through whom God would send the Messiah into the world.

REDEDICATION

12:27-30 The reconstruction of the walls had already been completed, as explained in chapter 13. However, in order to lay the foundation for the rededication of the city, which was symbolized by the dedication of the walls of the city, other logistical matters had to be set in place. The population had to be distributed, both in Jerusalem, as well as throughout Judea.

In this context, we would assume that the reading of the law by Ezra centered around those contexts that dealt with the existence of the nation of Israel, her sins and repentance. The people had to make a covenant to keep the law. This was in conjunction with fasting, prayer and the feast of tabernacles. All these things took some time to accomplish, but prepared the people for the events that are recorded in this chapter.

12:31-43 ***Upon the wall:*** There were two groups, one led by Ezra and the other led by Nehemiah. They marched around the top of the wall in opposite directions. They came together at the area of the temple where there was a great celebration. The people had a great deal to celebrate. After almost 100 years from the time of the first return of exiles through the leadership of Zerubbabel, they could now rejoice over the fact that the temple and walls of the city were reestablished as symbols of the existence of the nation of Israel. Though still under the dominion of the Persian Empire, Israel could rejoice in her identity as a people who had finally come together as one nation in the land of promise. ***Musical instruments of David:*** David had introduced musical instruments into the celebrations of the Jews (See 1 Sm 10:5; 2 Sm 6:5; 1 Ch 16:42; 25:1; 2 Ch 5:12; 29:25; Ps 150:3). ***Wives ... children:*** Though the women did not customarily participate in the Jewish celebrations, on this occasion every one was included. It was a day of national celebration and all those who represented the remnant of Israel was to participate in the joyous occasion.

REFORMS

12:44-47 Mentioned in this context are various reforms that Nehemiah made after he returned from the Persian king. He was initially in Palestine for twelve years (5:14; 13:6), after which he made a brief return to the Persian capital. What is interesting is the manifestation of his astringent leadership in initiating these reforms upon his return. Knowing that Israel must preserve her identity in order to be identified as the nation through whom God fulfilled His promises, Nehemiah was stern in implementing what had to be done in order to comply with the law of God. ***The offerings:*** In order to perpetuate the sacrifices, the priests and Levites had to be supported. After the celebrations and dedication of the walls, therefore, Nehemiah appointed those who would administer the contributions for the support of the priests and Levites. Even the singers and gatekeepers were to receive their portion of the peoples' tithes. Support of those who minister to the spiritual needs of the people is beneficial for the people. The people always need spiritual leadership. And in order to guarantee that spiritual leadership exists, the worshipers of God must make sure that those who seek to give themselves to the people for spiritual leadership are adequately supported (See comments 2 Co 9:6,7). It has always been God's plan that His people financially support those who commit themselves to the spiritual leadership of His flock. If one is worthy of such support, then he is to be supported.

Chapter 13

13:1-9 Nehemiah was passionate about reforming and maintaining purity in Israel. When we read through his actions that are recorded in this chapter, we are reminded of Jesus' cleansing of the temple (Mt 21:12,13; Mk 11:15-17; Lk 19:45,46; Jn 2:13-17). We are also reminded of how Jesus dealt with the Pharisees who hypocritically professed the law, but lived contrary to it (Mt 23:13-36). The example of the lives of Nehemiah, and Jesus while in the flesh, illustrate that there must be radical change when sin is involved. ***No Ammonite or Moabite:*** The sincerity of the people in their efforts to keep the law was here manifested. When they read in the law that they were not to join themselves in any way to the Ammonites or Moabites, they excluded the Ammonites and Moabites from their fellowship (See Dt 23:3-5). ***Eliashib ... Tobiah:*** Neither marital relationships nor relationships through relatives were to be maintained if they led to compromise or violation of the law of God. In this case, Eliashib was related by marriage to Tobiah, an Ammonite, and a person who previously joined in opposition to Nehemiah. ***I cast out all the household goods of Tobiah:*** Tobiah was a Gentile. Not only were his household goods cast out, but Tobiah himself was thrown out. Tobiah's presence among the consecrated vessels of worship was an outrage. We must never underestimate the influence of relationships through marriage. In this case, Eliashib had committed a grievous sin, a sin about which Nehemiah was sorely disturbed.

13:10-13 Because the people failed to support the Levites, they had to return to their fields and raise crops for food. During Nehemiah's absence while he was in Shushan, it seems that the people failed to carry through on their promise to support the Levites. We must keep in mind that this was a first generation of people who were to live according to the demands of the law. They were not accustomed to supporting the Levites, and thus needed the firm leadership of Nehemiah. ***I contended with the rulers:*** It was a failure of leadership that led to the lack of support for the Levites and temple servants. It seems that the people were falling back to their old way of life of caring for themselves and ignoring the spiritual matters of Israel. When God's people do not support their spiritual leaders, it is a sign of spiritual immaturity.

13:14-22 The Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between God and Israel. The other nations did not keep the Sabbath, and thus, when Israel kept the Sabbath it was a manifestation, a signal, that they were keeping it because of their covenant with God. While Nehemiah was gone from Judah on his trip back to Shushan, the local people were carrying on with their normal business on the Sabbath. ***Evil thing:*** Their working on the Sabbath was an evil act, an open violation of the sign that they had a covenant with God. In order to stop the Gentile merchants from doing their business in Jerusalem, they closed the gates of the city at sundown on Friday and did not open them again until after the Sabbath. What they did in the interior towns and villages, we are not told. But assuming that their actions in Jerusalem would set an example for the others, we assume that they did the same. ***I will lay hands on you:*** Nehemiah was going to become physical in carrying out the observance of the Sabbath. It seems that the merchants were more concerned over making a profit than honoring a Jewish Sabbath. It is interesting to note that Nehemiah did

not reproach them for doing an evil thing of not honoring the Sabbath, but for tempting the Jews of the city to break the Sabbath. These merchants were from Tyre, and thus, not Jews. The Sabbath had no religious significance to them. And in the contexts, Nehemiah realized this. They were not guilty of breaking the Sabbath, for the Sabbath did not apply to them. It applied to Jews only, not to Gentiles. They were only the occasion for the Jews to be tempted to trade also on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a sign only between God and the Israelite nation, not a sign of a covenant between God and all mankind.

13:23-31 The final restoration that Nehemiah made concerns the preservation of the Israelite nation. In order for it to be known that the Messiah came from Israel in fulfillment of the promises of God, a nation of Israel had to be known to be in existence at the time of the coming of the Messiah. This is the context of what is stated in this text, and the context of Ezra 10. This explains the drastic measures that were taken by both Ezra and Nehemiah in correcting this problem in Israel at this time in their history. Since the return of the remnant from captivity was for the purpose of establishing again the Israelite community in Palestine, then that community must not lose its identity. ***I cleansed them from all aliens:*** In order to preserve the identity of Israel in Palestine, all the foreigners had to go. Ezra had made the people commit to this, but by the time of Nehemiah's arrival, they had forgotten their commitment. It is always a strong cultural urge that people of different cultures who live together, to intermarry. This is a natural occurrence. But in relation to the purpose of God with the nation of Israel at this time in history, the identity of Israel in the promise land had to be maintained until the coming of the Messiah. When the Messiah came, there would be neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ (Gl 3:26-29). There are now no religious restraints in the eyes of God on who can marry whom of any culture.

Historical Epilogue

The writing of Nehemiah and Malachi constitute the final inspired Scriptures that were dedicated to the history of Israel. There are only a few historical sources in reference to Jewish history from the time of the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem to the time of Alexander the Great. However, from the time of Alexander to the time of Jesus, there is a great deal of history.

In 332 B.C., Alexander conquered the area of Palestine, which conquest ended over two centuries of Persian control. As with many other places that were conquered by Alexander, Hellenism was brought into the culture of the people. This was particularly true of the Greek language which Alexander took throughout his empire.

In 323 B.C., Alexander died. After his death, his generals waged war among themselves, and subsequently divided the Greek Empire into four regions, one constituting the area of Palestine. By 301 B.C. the Ptolemaic Dynasty, a Greek family that ruled in Egypt, had taken control of Judea. In 200 B.C., the Seleucid King Antiochus III conquered Judea. The Seleucids were of Greek origin and controlled Syria. Antiochus III followed the example of the Persians by giving religious freedom to his subjects. However, his successor, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, reversed this policy, and subsequently brought great religious persecution on the Jews. (Some have suggested that he was the "contemptible person" that is mentioned in Dn 11:21.)

Antiochus IV used Judea as a platform from which to launch his attacks against Egypt. However, in 168 B.C. his efforts were stopped. It was at this time that the suppressed Jews of Jerusalem seized the opportunity to rebel against the oppression of Antiochus. However, this rebellion was crushed and Antiochus introduced pagan practices in Jerusalem and forbade the observance of Jewish feasts. In order to insult the Jews, in 167 B.C. Antiochus offered a pig, an unclean animal, upon the altar in Jerusalem. (Reference to this event is probably made in Dn 11:31.) This action sparked a rebellion on the part of the Jews. This rebellion was led by a priest named Mattathias of the Hasmonean family, and subsequently began the Hasmonean period. There were five sons in the Mattathias family. Led by Mattathias, the Jews regained their religious freedom. In 164 B.C. the temple was cleansed and rededicated.

It was during the Hasmonean period that the Maccabees became prominent leaders for Jewish causes. They led in the victory over the Seleucids, and thus established themselves as the ruling family of the time. One of the sons of Mattathias, Judas Maccabeus, was prominent in this revolt.

In 163 and 162 B.C., Judas led other campaigns in order to deliver Jews who were suppressed in other regions of Palestine. The Maccabees, or Hasmoneans, became known as the defenders of the Jewish faith throughout this time, and thus gave rise to Jewish nationalism. The Seleucids sought to defeat the growing Jewish nationalism. However, in 161 B.C. the Hasmoneans signed an agreement with the Romans in order to gain their protection from the Seleucids. It was at this time that the empire of the Seleucids was coming apart. An irony of history was that the Seleucid Empire was disintegrating from within, and thus, some within the royalty of the Seleucids asked the Hasmoneans for help. In return, the Jews were given religious freedom and national autonomy. But at the same time, the Seleucids gained control of much of the northern area of Palestine. But it was in 141 B.C. that the last Greek outpost was removed from Jerusalem, and thus the Jews were relieved from any taxation by the Seleucids.

It was at this time that there were significant territorial gains by the Jews throughout the area. John Hyrcanus I (135 - 104 B.C.) was known for his successful military campaigns against the Samaritans and Idumeans. He destroyed a Samaritan temple that was on Mt. Gerizim. He also conquered Shechem. The Jews allowed the conquered Idumeans to stay in their lands, but they had to be circumcised. In 104/103 B.C. Aristobolus, the son of John Hyrcanus, conquered Galilee. Alexander Jannaeus (103 - 76 B.C.) conquered the coastal territory of Palestine and much of the transjordan area. He was a cruel ruler, which resulted in dissension within the region. Jannaeus gave the rule of much of his territory to his wife, Salome. However, her reign was plagued with civil war between her two sons, Aristobolus II and Hyrcanus II.

The period of Hasmonean control of Palestine was the last

period of history when the Jews had control of a portion of the promised land. The next time they gained such control was when Israel declared herself a state in 1948, which declaration and independence continues to this day.

Sometime between the end of Nehemiah's governorship and the coming of Jesus, the Sadducean priestly class of rich Jews developed. The Pharisees also came about during this period, though it is difficult to determine when they first became known as the Pharisees. The Sadducees were an aristocratic upper class of people. They had political interest, and subsequently became prominent in both politics and religion. The Pharisees developed as a reaction to the Sadducees. Their reaction to the compromising religious practices of the Sadducees led them to become very legalistic in reference to the law of God. The Pharisees thus gained the reputation for being the defenders of the law of God. By the time Jesus arrived, both the Sadducees and Pharisees were established in the religious and cultural environment of Palestine.

When the Jews signed an alliance with the Romans in order to defend themselves against the Seleucids, the invitation to the Romans eventually led to Roman control of Palestine. At the time the Hasmoneans were at the height of their power, the Roman Empire was growing. In 63 B.C. Pompey arrived in Jerusalem with Roman legions. Rome's conquest of the Jewish state was diplomatic. The Jews were allowed to maintain their own faith and carry on with their feasts. However, they were allowed to do so only if they remained loyal to Rome. The successor of Pompey, Gabinius, the governor of Syria from 57 to 55 B.C., sought to divide Palestine into five districts. But the effort sparked a violent reaction by the Jews, and thus the effort was terminated. From the experience, however, the Romans realized that Palestine was a volatile region and Jewish nationalism was still alive.

In 39 B.C. Caesar Octavius, and the Roman Senate, appointed Herod the Great, to be the vassal king over Judea. He was a very cruel king. He believed that examples of punishment discouraged rebellion. One of his greatest feats was the restoration of the temple in 20 B.C. Jesus was born within two years before Herod's death in 4 B.C. After his death, Archelaus became the king of Judea. However, he was unable to maintain order in the region, and subsequently, Rome made Judea a Roman province and placed it directly under Roman rule. When Jesus began His ministry, Palestine was an occupied land that was controlled by Rome. It remained an occupied land by the Roman Empire until the fall of Rome in the 5th century A.D.

Historical Lesson

Israel learned a great historical lesson from her cycle of rebellions and restorations. The nation had gone the route of one thousand years of repetitive rebellions and restorations by the time God allowed Babylon to take the final two tribes into captivity. They thus reaped the whirlwind from their rebellion against the will of God. The end result was captivity, both Assyrian (722/21 B.C.) and Babylonian (586 B.C.). And at the end of this history of turmoil, only a small remnant made their way back from captivity to resettle the promised land. They learned through this divine discipline something that is best discovered in their attitude and actions in rebuilding the city of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. They brought forth fruits of repentance.

When Cyrus came to the throne of the Medo-Persian Empire in 538 B.C., Israel's woes were over in reference to being in foreign captivity for their sins. It was a time in 536 B.C. for God's people to start going home. Zerubbabel led an initial group of the remnants in 536 B.C. This was followed by Ezra's group in 457 B.C. And finally, Hanani came from Judah to Nehemiah in the palace of Shushan in Babylon with a report concerning the survivors of the captivity and the condition of the city of Jerusalem. The report was not good. The survivors were in great distress and reproach (1:3).

When Nehemiah heard this report, he *"sat down and wept and mourned for many days"* (1:4). He fasted and prayed. After confessing the rebellion of Israel—the reason for their disbursement among the nations—Nehemiah recounted before God His promise of their restoration to the promised land. God had promised, *"... if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them ... I will gather them from there* [the land of their captivity]*, and bring them to the place that I have chosen as a dwelling for My name"* (1:8,9).

Nehemiah subsequently went to Judah. In the middle of the night, and in the company of a few trusted friends, he surveyed the destruction of Jerusalem. He then presented his vision to the officials (2:17). After reassuring them that God would be with them, he urged them, *"Let us rise up and build"* (2:18). What happened next is one of the most remarkable stories of history that is recorded in the Bible. It is a story of determination and accomplishment. It is a story that reaffirms how God made us. If we are united in our goals, nothing will be withheld from us which we determine to do (Gn 11:6).

What led up to the determination to rebuild during Nehemiah's time, is a legacy of struggle and procrastination. Ezra, a priestly leader among the people, recorded that the rebuilding of the temple began many years before in the days of Cyrus (Er 3:8-13; 5:16). However, opposition arose from the Samaritans who were dwelling in the land (Er 4:1-5). The work subsequently ceased during the early reign of the Medo-Persian Darius (Er 4:24). While work was idle, the people focused on their own living. They began to live comfortably while the city as a whole continued to lay in ruins (See Er 1:9). God then sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to motivate the people to continue the reconstruction, which they did (Er 4:24; 5:1ff). During the reign of Darius, reconstruction of the temple was completed in 515 B.C. (Er 6:13-16). However, because of persistent opposition, work again ceased on reconstruction of the remainder of the city. It was not until the coming of Nehemiah in 444 B.C., over ninety years after the initial return of captives in 536 B.C., that work began again in order to complete the remainder of the city. Because of Nehemiah's inspirational leadership, it was during the first year after his arrival to the city that the walls were eventually completed and a national revival in faith occurred among the Jews (12:27 - 13:31).

When Nehemiah first went to the promised land, his mis-

sion was to complete the reconstruction of the city and to reform the spiritual life of the returnees. After he surveyed the ruins upon his arrival, he gave a stirring exhortation to the residents. The result of his exhortation was that *"they set their hands to do this good work"* (2:18). Against all opposition, they set themselves to the task of bringing their dreams into reality. It thus took a unique leader to arise when the time was right to stir a lethargic group into action.

However, when good things are about to happen, we cannot expect Satan to remain idle. Quite the opposite. The determined workers faced the opposition of Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. Nehemiah said, *"They laughed us to scorn and despised us"* (2:19). So he answered their ridicule by encouraging the workers, *"The God of heaven Himself will prosper us"* (2:20). But the workers' antagonists persisted. They mocked the zealous workers (4:1). *"What are these feeble Jews doing?"* (4:2). *"Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall"* (4:3). And so the opposition continued. There were continued threats. Continued ridicule. Slander. There was even a conspiracy to kill Nehemiah (ch 6).

But through the continual encouragement of Nehemiah, the determined workers persisted. They were able to persist against such great odds because of a spirit that Nehemiah generated in their hearts. That spirit was, ***"The people had a mind to work"*** (4:6). If they had not this spirit, then they would certainly have succumbed to the tremendous opposition they faced during the reconstruction.

In Genesis 11 it is stated that God came down from heaven during the days when men sought to accomplish the misguided goal of building a tower whose top would reach even to the heavens. Though their goal and purpose was wrong, God made a statement about the nature of man whom He had created: *"... **nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them**"* (Gn 11:6). God created us with this nature. If we make a plan, establish a goal, and have a united mind to work, then nothing will be withheld from us that we determine to do. As Christians, we are more than conquerors through the Lord (See Rm 8:31-37). If God is for us, then there is no force strong enough to overcome the Christian. Christians must always maintain the attitude that was expressed by the apostle Paul, *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Ph 4:18). We can do more than those who conquer (build) things of the world because God works in us *"to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us"* (Ep 3:20). Therefore, if men can accomplish great things on their own outside the plan of God, then God's people can do even greater things when their plans are for His glory and to the accomplishment of His purposes. This was one of the principle lessons we glean from the life of Nehemiah. It is the task of the people of God to bring their plans into harmony with the eternal plan of God for the purpose of this world. Nehemiah was a leader who brought the people's desires and plans into harmony with the purpose of God to preserve the seed of Abraham until the coming of the Messiah. Leaders of God's people today must do likewise. They must bring the desires of the people into harmony with God's plan to send His Son again to this world in order to take them to their eternal home in the presence of God. The final aspirations of leadership is to lead the people into eternal heaven. Therefore, if one does not have a sincere hope for the future, then he or she is handicapped in leading the people.

Esther

WRITER

This book is named after the principal character, Esther. Her Jewish name was Hadassah. Some believe that she was Queen Amestris whom the historian Herodotus mentioned as the queen during the reign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus), the king of Persia. The name Esther means "a star," which was possibly given to her because of her unique beauty.

There is no indication within the text as to who wrote this book. Even among Jewish scholars there is no agreement concerning the writer. Some have suggested that Mordecai, Esther's uncle, wrote the book. Augustine thought Ezra was the writer. There are even some who have thought that the source of the material was copied from records of the Persian Empire, and then transcribed as the book by a scribe who lived sometime in the latter part of the 4th century B.C. Regardless of the authorship, the Jews accepted the book as inspired by the Holy Spirit, and thus it became a part of the Old Testament canon of Scriptures that we have in our possession today as the Bible.

DATE

Some have suggested that the book was written before Ezra led the second group of exiles back to Palestine in 457 B.C. Some have also suggested a later date of around 350 B.C., just before the Greeks conquered the Medo-Persian Empire. If the events of the book took place after Ezra's return with exiles, but before the work of Nehemiah, then the events of the book took place between chapters 6 & 7 of the book of Ezra. The exact date of writing, however, is difficult to determine.

King Ahasuerus in the book was the Persian King Xerxes of the Persian Empire. Ahasuerus was his Hebrew name. The wedding banquet of Esther's inauguration to be queen took place in the seventh year of Ahasuerus, which would be about 479 B.C. This was four years

after the banquet in chapter 1 where Vashti refused to parade herself before the friends of the king, and subsequently was banished.

Ahasuerus (Xerxes) was defeated by the Greeks at Salamis in 480 B.C. The events of the book, therefore, could have taken place upon his return to his palace a defeated king somewhere between 483 to 474 B.C. This would explain his paranoia concerning the slanderous report of Haman that a "certain people" in his realm were planning a rebellion.

BOOK

Esther was a Jewish orphan girl who eventually became the queen of Persia. She was brought up in Shushan by her uncle, Mordecai. The book that is named after her is a history of Israel while the Jews were in the lands of their captivity. It is a historical chronicle that centers around the life of two people, and particularly around the fate of all Jews who lived throughout the Persian Empire.

Some have presented various reasons that would question the canonicity of this book. These reasons have been based on the nature of the book. Those who have doubted the authenticity of the canonicity of the book have noted the fact that God is not mentioned in the book. However, there is probably no other book in the entire Bible that portrays the providential work of God in the lives of His people more than the book of Esther. It is also objected that none of the inspired writers of the New Testament refer to the book. But quotations by other inspired writers are not a final verification of inspiration. This is true simply because the writers of the Bible were not required to refer to one another in order to prove their inspiration. Except for the term "fasting," there are no other religious terms used in the book. But when considering the plan of God to bring the Messiah into the world, the book of Esther gives us a vital historical view of how God providentially preserved the returned exiles in order that they be the foundation upon which He fulfilled His promises to the seed of Abraham. But more important, the book gives us a history of this preservation from the inner court of the Persian Empire, the greatest empire of the world at that time in history.

What the book does offer to the Bible student is a history of the life of two people, Esther and Mordecai, who eventually lived in the inner court of the Persian Empire. The historical facts of the book give us a picture of the social predicament of the Jews who were living as former captives throughout the territory of the Persian Empire. It reveals how they were discriminated against by other cultures who also lived under the domain of the Persian Empire. And for the Jews, it gives the historical background of the feast of Purim, a holiday that was established by the Jews in order to celebrate the providence of God.

One of the things that makes the book of Esther so exciting is the fact that it deals with many themes in reference to the people of God. These themes focus our attention both on the work of God in history and God's work through those who have committed their lives to Him. Consider these themes: (1) **Godly living:** Though there is no mention of the name "God" in the book, the lives of both Mordecai and Esther exemplify the lives of people who are committed to God and His purposes. What the skeptic would consider coincidences in the lives of these two characters of the book, the believer stands in wonder at how God worked all things together for the good of His people. Their godly desires kept them focused on the purpose of their citizenship in the eternal kingdom of God. (2) **The God of history:** The book clearly fits into the historical survival of the people of God until the coming of the Messiah. When understood in its historical context, the book of Esther is a clear revelation of how God worked in the events surrounding His people in order that they survive to bring about His purpose for their existence. If we stand as spectators in watching the events transpire throughout the lives of Esther and Mordecai, we can come to no other conclusion than God working at this point in history to guarantee the continuation of the seedline of David until the Messiah was born. (3) **Humble service:** God has an eternal purpose (see 4:14). In the submission of the two characters of the book, we see that when one understands God's eternal purposes, he submits his life to His plan. In their submission to His purposes, Mordecai and Esther trusted in God's providential care as they humbly submitted to His work in carrying out His plans. (4) **Obedience in times of conflict:** The book is a story of conflict between good and evil, right and wrong. In this conflict, it is comforting to see the obedience of those who do that which is right, and consequently, see the reward of their choice to do the right thing. Esther chose to do that which was right in obeying Mordecai (2:10,20; 4:8-16), though her choice set her against the law of the land (4:11,18; 5:1,2). Mordecai chose to do right by not obeying a senseless law (3:2-8). These two chose to obey God rather than man, and as a result, they survived in the conflicts, and the unrighteous perished (At 4:19,20; 5:29). (5) **The demise of the arrogant:** Haman was a character of great pride and arrogance. The book is a classic description of those who would conduct themselves in such a manner, revealing the end of such arrogant behavior (See 3:5; 5:0-14; 7:8-10). One of the great contrasts of the book is in the difference between the humble nature of Mordecai and the arrogant pride of Haman. In the end, humility won, and pride brought death (See 6:1-3; 8:9-15).

The events and proclamations of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi took place during the zenith of the Medo-Persian Empire. Persia, or modern-day Iran, came into world dominance when Cyrus ascended to the throne, and subsequently absorbed the Babylonian Empire.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Little is known of the early development of the Persian people. They possibly migrated into the Mesopotamia region around 1000 B.C. By the 7th century B.C., the Medes were a united power who dominated the Persians. In 612 B.C., the Medes had allied themselves with the Babylonians, and then conquered Nineveh, bringing an end to the Assyrian Empire. The Persians eventually became the dominant power of the region, which power eventually led to the rise of what was called the Medo-Persian Empire. Cyrus the Great was the first recognized king of this empire. Under the leadership of Cyrus, the Babylonian Empire came to an end when Cyrus defeated the Babylonian army of King Nabonidus at Opis. After Cyrus came King Cambyses who conquered territory for the Persian Empire that extended into Egypt. After Cambyses came Darius I Hystaspes (Er 4:24; Hb 1:1; Zc 1:1). He extended the borders of the Empire westward as far as the Aegean Sea and eastward to the Indus River. Under his reign he organized the Empire into twenty districts, or satrapies. He gave the people in each district some autonomy to govern themselves. Judah was part of the satrapy that was called "Beyond the River" (Er 4:10; Ne 2:7). During his reign he sought to subject the Greeks to Persian control. In 490 B.C. he invaded Greece with a massive army, but was routed by the Greeks at the battle of Marathon. After his death, Xerxes (Ahasuerus), came to the throne of Persia. It was during the reign of Xerxes that another massive Persian army was formed in order to conquer the Greeks. But this campaign turned into a military disaster for the Persians when a small fleet of Greek ships defeated the Persians in the bay of Salamis, near Athens. It was during the reign of Xerxes that the story of Esther took place. There was a great deal of national drama that was affecting the nation, and in many ways this drama is reflected in the events that took place in the capital of Persia, even to the palace into which Esther was called. What everyone did not know is that God was working in the drama to accomplish His plans.

The Ascension Of Esther
(1:1 – 2:23)

Outline: (1) Rejection of Vashti (1:1-22), (2) Selection of Esther (2:1-23)

Chapter 1
REJECTION OF VASHTI

1:1-9 The history of Esther begins with the setting of how she became queen of the greatest world empire of that time. Ahasuerus (Xerxes) reigned from 486 to 465 B.C. ***Shushan:*** Or, Susa. ***The powers of Persia and Media:*** This six-month feast was probably a regrouping of the leaders of the Persian Empire in order to reassess their military position in reference to threats against the Empire that existed at this time in reign of Xerxes. ***Couches were of gold and silver:*** The historian Herodotus mentioned these eloquent furnishings in the palaces of Persia. Many archaeological discoveries have been made of this area of the world that reflect the grandeur of the Persian Empire. ***Drinking was not compulsory:*** It seems that some of the leaders refrained from drinking alcohol in order to maintain their composure. Every feast as this was political, and thus some of those who were invited wanted to use the occasion for politics. ***The queen also made a feast:*** It was not the custom that the woman participate in the feast that was conducted by the king and his men. Therefore, the queen conducted a parallel feast for the wives of the leaders.

1:10-12 The intoxicated king made an irrational demand on the queen, whom, he supposed, would on his command parade herself immodestly before the men of the king's feast. ***Queen Vashti refused:*** She certainly knew the consequences of her refusal. At least she knew that there would be some consequences to pay for refusing to obey the king. We would thus accredit Vashti with the moral stature of all those women who would refuse to allow themselves to be objects of immoral thought by parading themselves before others.

1:13-22 ***Chamberlains:*** These were eunuchs of the king's court who served the royal family. ***Men who knew the times:*** These would be the astrologers of the king's court who gave advice to the king. They possibly took advantage of the situation in order to maintain the submission of the women throughout the Empire. Memucan's answer was based on the belief that the example of the queen would encourage women throughout the Empire to show contempt for their husbands. However, there may have been some personal drama playing itself out in the inner court of the royal palace. There may have been some personal contention between the king and the queen, with the astrologers taking advantage of the situation in order to advance their beliefs. It would appear that they had a falling out with the queen before this event, and thus they took advantage of the opportunity to have her removed from the court. For some reason than what was stated here, the advisors gave advice that resulted in the queen being banished from the presence of the king.

Chapter 2
SELECTION OF ESTHER

2:1-4 ***He remembered Vashti:*** It seems that there may be some remorse expressed here on the part of the king. But in his drunken stupor he had signed the decree to have her banished, and thus could not have her recalled to her former position. It is possible that after this feast of military personnel, Ahasuerus (Xerxes) took the Persian army on a military campaign against the Greeks for three to four years. The Persians were defeated at Salamis in 480 B.C., and again at Plataea in 479 B.C. Upon his return to Shushan, the events recorded in verse 16 are the beginning of the drama that took place in the royal court concerning Esther.

2:5-11 ***Mordecai ... Kish:*** Kish was the great grandfather

of Mordecai. He had been taken with the original captives who went into the Babylonian exile in 597 B.C. This was the conquest of Jerusalem during which Jeconiah, the king of Judah, was also taken into captivity. The events of Esther, therefore, took place almost 100 years after the initial captivities of Jews from Judah. Both Mordecai and Esther, as well as their parents, were born in captivity. ***Fair and beautiful:*** She must have had a unique beauty in the sense that she drew the attention of people. She was of such a demeanor, that Hegai, the chief chamberlain, or eunuch, preferred her above all the other young maidens who were brought from throughout the territories of the Empire. Considering the fact that she was a Jew who had been brought up with the morals of Mordecai, we would conclude also that her spiritual demeanor was greater than the Gentile maidens of the Persian Empire. ***House of women:*** Or, the harem. ***Not revealed her people:*** The Jews were not culturally favored by the Persians. Though some of the Jews had been in the territory of their original captors for about 100 years, they still suffered from the prejudice of the people of the regions in which they were living. Knowing that this prejudice existed, and that most of the Jews would remain in the land of their former captors until the coming of the Messiah, God was here working behind the scenes in order to bring some relief to His people in exile. The book of Esther is a history of how the Jews were able to deliver themselves from the conspiracy of Haman, and thus become more prominent in the Persian Empire. By the time of Nehemiah, Nehemiah was in the king's court, and eventually was appointed a governor of Judah. We would assume that this took place because Esther became the queen of the Persian Empire in order that the Jews gain more respect throughout the Empire.

2:12-18 Before the young maidens went before the king, who was probably away from the royal palace at this time, they were under the care of the royal court for one year. They were given the clothes and cosmetics they desired by which they prepared themselves to be presented before the king. Esther wisely submitted to the directions of Hegai, the king's chamberlain. She allowed him to make the choices as to how she would present herself before the king. The result was that Esther was immediately favored by the king. In order to gain the acceptance of the people, the king had a great banquet. He also reduced the taxes of the people.

2:19-20 ***Esther followed the command of Mordecai:*** The great character of Esther was revealed by the respect she had for Mordecai. Even while designated as the queen of the greatest world empire at the time, she still respected and obeyed the one who took care of her in her youth. The maturity of youth is manifested in their respect for their elders.

2:21-23 The plot to assassinate the king laid the foundation for what later became of Mordecai. The discovery of the plot by Mordecai was almost coincidental. However, when considered with the theme of what eventually happened in the life of Esther and Mordecai, we understand that God was working in the lives of these two people in order to bring about a deliverance of the Jews in their land of captivity. Since the deliverance from the proposed genocide by Haman in the near future came during the time when Esther was the queen, we would assume that God was seeking to relieve the Jews in captivity of some of those who were greatly prejudiced against them. Since the deliverance was throughout the Empire, we would assume that God was focusing on the preservation of the returned remnant in the land of Judah. ***Hanged:*** From the archives of the Persian Empire, people were actually impaled, and then their corpses were hanged on a tree for public exhibition. In the events of this history, the ten sons of Haman were first killed with the sword, but afterward their bodies were hanged on the gallows of their father (9:10-14; compare Dt 21:22,23; Ja 8:29; 10:26; 1 Sm 31:8-10; 2 Sm 4:12; 21:9,10).

The Deliverance Of The Jews
(3:1 – 10:3)

Outline: (1) Conspiracy of Haman (3:1-15), (2) Mordecai persuades Esther (4:1-17), (3) Esther exposes Haman (5:1 – 8:17), (4) Deliverance of the Jews (9:1-17), (5) The feast of Purim (9:18-32), (6) Advancement of Mordecai (10:1-3)

Chapter 3
CONSPIRACY OF HAMAN

3:1-6 ***Haman ... the Agagite:*** We can assume why Haman despised the Jews since he was a descendant of the Amalekite King Agag (See 1 Sm 15:8,33). Since Israel had the mandate from God to destroy all the Amalekites because of their mistreatment of Israel immediately after the nation came out of Egyptian captivity, Haman devised a plan to do the same to them. His was a plan of revenge for his forefathers. ***Mordecai did not bow:*** Because he knew God's desire that the Amalekites should have been annihilated from history because of their grievous sin in reference to His chosen nation, Mordecai would not manifest any submission to Haman. In his mind, God's mandate that the Amalekites be obliterated from history still stood, regardless of the high ranking of Haman. ***Whether Mordecai's words would stand:*** They spoke to Haman to see if he would endure the conduct of Mordecai. ***Laying hands on Mordecai alone:*** Haman's grudge was not simply against Mordecai, but against all the Jews. It would seem that not only did Mordecai refuse to pay homage to Haman, but all the Jews likewise did not submit. As the second most powerful person in the Persian Empire, Haman thus sought how he might alleviate from the Empire a race of people he despised. But not only did his scheme fail, similar schemes of every government that would seek to do the same to the Jews throughout history have also failed.

3:7-9 ***A certain people:*** Haman planned his genocide of the Jews by deceiving the king with slanderous words about the Jews. We must understand the king's willingness to believe Haman in the context of the recent defeat that Ahasuerus (Xerxes) had experienced by the Greeks. Ahasuerus was probably still feeling the humiliating defeat of his army by the small forces of the Greeks at Salamis. If there were any threat of rebellion in the Empire, he wanted to squash it immediately. ***Among the people in all the provinces:*** This statement is significant in view of the fact that at this time in history the Persian Empire included all the former territories of the Assyrians and Babylonians, the territories to which the Jews were taken

into captivity. The "certain people" (the Jews) who were scattered throughout the Persian Empire included all twelve tribes of Israel. Concerning all the returns of the Israelites from captivity, therefore, the Bible student must clearly understand that a remnant of this "certain people" (all twelve tribes of Israel) returned to the land of promise. God did not fail in His promise that if they repented, a remnant of all twelve tribes would be allowed to return to the land of promise. ***They cast Pur:*** Haman knew that he could talk the king into following his murderous scheme against the Jews. Before he went to the king, therefore, he cast lots in order to determine the date for the genocide. The casting of the lots determined that the twelfth month would be the time of the genocide. This was eleven months from the time they cast the lots. ***Their laws are different:*** Though living in the land of their former captors for almost 100 years by the time this statement was made, the Israelites maintained their obedience to the commandments of God. They had been taken into captivity because they had rejected the commandments of God (Hs 4:6). But in captivity, they repented and were restored by their obedience to the word of God. ***I will pay 10,000 talents:*** This was almost two-thirds the annual income of the Empire from taxes and tribute. We must not think that Haman himself would come up with this amount of money from his own resources. His plan was to confiscate the property of the Jews after the genocide. Whether the king realized this, we are not told. It was a law of the land that the state could confiscate the possessions of traitors. If the king knew the plan for payment, then this might help us understand why Ahasuerus agreed to such a murderous scheme in the first place. This also helps us to understand that while in the land of their former captors, the Israelites were not idle and impoverished. By this time in their history they were functioning well within the economy of the Persian Empire. They were financially blessed in order that they might continue to support the return of the exiles to the land of Palestine. The first exiles had returned almost 100 years before, and Ezra's group returned somewhere around the time of the events of the book of Esther. Those Jews who stayed in the land of the captors financially helped those who returned to Judah. It may have been this great financial strength of the Jews throughout the Persian Empire that caused Haman to be jealous of the Jews.

3:10-15 ***The silver is given to you:*** We are not told if Haman suggested this in his discussions with the king, or if this was the king's idea. Whatever the case, the great amount of silver the Jews possessed was going to be confiscated by Haman. Of that which was to be confiscated, 10,000 talents was going to be given to the state. ***The king's ring:*** This was the signet ring that was designed in a way that a stamp could be made on decrees, which stamp made the decrees official. In giving the ring to Haman, the king was relinquishing the sovereignty of the Empire to Haman to carry out his scheme. ***Shushan was perplexed:*** Or, the people were in confusion.

Chapter 4
MORDECAI PERSUADES ESTHER

4:1-3 After the decree for the genocide of the Jews went throughout the Empire, Mordecai's actions portrayed the feelings of the Jews. They had done nothing to deserve what was coming from the state. In order to manifest his mourning, he did what was customary among the Jews, that is tear his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes. This action was a declaration to everyone of the great consternation and confusion that existed among the Jews.

4:4-9 ***Show it to Esther:*** The queen did not know of the decree that had gone out. Since such legal matters did not pertain to the women of the kingdom, Haman and his men acted immediately in order to carry out the conspiracy against the Jews, though the day of genocide did not come for several months. Thus Mordecai had to inform Esther about the matter when he sent Hatach back to her with the news of what was going to happen.

4:10-17 ***Who is not called:*** The law was that no one could approach the king without the king's invitation. If one sought to approach the king without an invitation, he was to be killed. This was a defensive measure for the protection of the king. It was to prevent assassinations. The normal procedure was that the king, through his guards or another representative, often his cupbearer, would invite someone into his presence. In this way the royal scepter was extended to a visitor. ***Do not think:*** Because Esther also was a Jew, she would not escape the genocide. Of course, Haman did not know that Esther was a Jew. If he had known, he would certainly not have schemed against the Jews. ***Relief and deliverance will arise:*** Mordecai's faith was here expressed. He knew that God would deliver his people from this senseless scheme of Haman. If Esther did not take a stand, God would work out another means by which to deliver His people. We must keep in mind that by this time thousands of Jews had returned to Palestine to rebuild the temple and walls of the city of Jerusalem. Judea fell within the realm of the Persian Empire. Therefore, the genocide would affect Jews as Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Nehemiah who were ministering in the Persian Empire to restore the remnant to Palestine. Men as Sanballat and Tobiah in Judah would be given the authority to attack the Jews in Judah (See comments of Ne). Though Jews as Mordecai had not returned to Palestine with men as Ezra, Mordecai and all Jews knew that it was the desire of God that the nation of Israel exist for the coming of the Messiah. ***Fast for me:*** The fasting and prayer was the manifestation of their faith in the providence of God. Though God is not mentioned in the book, all things that pertain to the work of God in the lives of His people are clearly revealed. In times of distress, the peoples' fasting and prayer was a proclamation of their faith that God continue to work among His people. ***If I perish, I perish:*** As in all instructions that came from Mordecai, Esther was obedient to her uncle who had brought her up from childhood. She was willing to risk her life for the life of Mordecai, and the rest of the Jews.

Chapter 5
ESTHER EXPOSES HAMAN

5:1-8 Esther was taking her life into her own hands when she entered the inner court of the palace. She entered in a way

that was not threatening, and thus the guards did not take action against her. She stood in a conspicuous place where she could be seen by the king. When seen by the king, she was invited into the presence of the king. The king may have found Esther's beauty irresistible, and thus she was drawn to him by her presentation. But we would conclude that God answered the prayer and fasting for three days by the people that she be given a hearing before the king. ***My petition and my request:*** The wisdom and good judgment of Esther was manifested in how she answered the king concerning her desires. We would not expect her to rush in and present the pleas of the people who were to be killed in the scheme of Haman. Instead, she wanted Haman in the presence of the king when the truth was revealed. In order to accomplish this, a banquet had to be prepared. The preparations for the banquet were already in progress when Esther stood before the king on this first occasion. She assumed that she would receive a positive answer to her request that the king attend a banquet.

5:9-14 Haman certainly thought it special to be personally invited to a banquet that involved only himself and the king and queen. We can only imagine his excitement about what was to come. However, on his way from the palace, he again encountered Mordecai who would not bow in his presence. His ego was crushed every time he came into the presence of Mordecai. ***Let a gallows be made:*** Zerech, Haman's wife, was certainly caught up in the excitement of Haman, for she also would profit from any exaltation of Haman in the Empire. In order to soothe the consternation of her husband concerning Mordecai, she suggested the means by which Mordecai would be put to death (Compare 1 Kg 21:1-16). ***Fifty cubits high:*** This is about 75 feet (about 23 meters). The tremendous height was to make Mordecai's hanging seen by everyone in Shushan. Haman wanted a public sign given to everyone who would defy him.

Chapter 6

6:1-3 ***The king could not sleep:*** It could have been that God was now at work in reference to all parties concerning the conspiracy of Haman. In order to prepare the mind of the king to give an immediate command that his prime minister be hanged, we would assume that God disturbed the sleep of the king. The mention of the sleepless night in this context leads us to believe that God caused the sleeplessness. God wanted the king to read about Mordecai, whom the king would later discover was a Jew. The king's normal procedure to overcome sleeplessness was to have read before him the chronicles of the kingdom, which reading was certainly boring. Nevertheless, it would have its intended effect, and thus allow the king to fall asleep. But in this case, a valiant deed was recalled by the king. Mordecai had not been rewarded for his act of loyalty in reference to the king. He had saved the king's life by thwarting the assassination scheme of Bigthan and Teresh (2:21). When he later discovered that Mordecai was a Jew, then he would conclude that the Jews were actually loyal to the king.

6:4-9 Haman had come early in the morning in order to get the king's permission to hang Mordecai. For this reason, he was in the court. But before he could initiate his plan, he was summoned by the king, and thus one of the greatest turns in events in the Bible started to be unveiled. From the time the king gave the order to Haman to honor Mordecai with the honor that was suggested by the presumptuous Haman himself, the deliverance of the Jews began. We can only imagine the shock that came to Haman once he heard that he was to bow down and pay homage to Mordecai. ***The royal apparel:*** Wearing the king's clothing manifested the king's favor of the one who was presented before the people (See 1 Sm 18:4; 2 Kg 2:13,14; Is 61:3,10; Zc 3; Mk 5:27).

6:10-14 ***Haman quickly went to his house mourning:*** The tables had been turned. Haman sought to oppress the downtrodden. But God seeks to raise them up (See 1 Sm 2:8; Rv 3:8,9). ***Mordecai came again to the king's gate:*** All the honor that was given to Mordecai did not change his humble character. Once all the parade was over, he went back to the king's gate. All the glory that was given to him did not change his life. ***You will not prevail against him:*** Zeresh and the wise men who stood with Haman, those with whom he assuredly schemed to murder the Jews, took what had happened as an omen. The omen was that Haman would surely fall before Mordecai. While they were still speaking, the judgment of God was being carried out against one who had thought to destroy the work of God by destroying His people.

Chapter 7

7:1-6 ***Banquet of wine:*** These were special banquets. The king again asked for what the queen requested. It was the first time that she revealed that she was a Jew. Not only was the revelation of her heritage revealed to the king, but also to Haman. The banquet, therefore, became an occasion of astonishment, anger and horror. The king was astonished that his beautiful queen was one of the people who would be destroyed in the genocide planned by Haman. He was astonished that it was a Jew, Mordecai, who saved his life from an attempted assassination. It was an occasion for him to be angry at Haman for developing such a scheme. And it was an occasion when Haman was stricken with terror by his immediate sentence of death. ***We are sold ... to be destroyed:*** Esther said that it would be fine to be sold into captivity. They were experiencing the social position as a lower class of bondage people in the Persian Empire. But in this case, they were sold into destruction by the promise of payment by Haman of 10,000 talents silver. Esther's reply to the king made it clear that the king had been deceived into carrying out a plot that would lead to the destruction of his beautiful queen.

7:7-10 The anger of the king was against Haman. He realized that he had been treacherously led into a scheme that would include the death of his beloved queen. And when Haman learned that Esther was a Jew, he immediately realized that he was in serious trouble, especially seeing the king storm out of their presence in anger. The fact that the king arose from the table and departed in anger meant that someone was going to die. ***Will he force the queen:*** It was customary that no one would be left in a room alone with the queen. But knowing that his death was imminent, Haman fell before the

queen's couch in order to plead through her for mercy from the king. But when the king saw the posture of Haman in reference to the queen, he thought Haman was making an immoral appeal before the queen. ***Covered Haman's face:*** This was the sign of an official arrest and sentence of death. ***They hanged Haman:*** The irony in the story was that all the evil that Haman had planned for another came back on him. He reaped what he had sown.

Chapter 8

8:1-6 ***The house of Haman:*** As was the custom of the time, the possessions of a traitor were confiscated by the state. In this case, the possessions of Haman were given to the one he had wronged. Esther then gave the house of Haman to Mordecai, signalling to the king that she desired that Mordecai be exalted to the position that Haman had formerly enjoyed. Mordecai was subsequently given second in command in the Persian Empire.

8:7-17 ***Seal ... may not be reversed:*** The death sentence to the Jews could not be changed because it was sealed with the king's signet ring. The only way to spare the Jews was to issue another decree that would allow the Jews to fight back. This decree also had to be sealed with the king's signet ring. ***127 Provinces:*** The genocide decree was not simply a local event. It went throughout all the Persian Empire, which included Judea where the original returnees had gone in order to rebuild the temple and restore the altar sacrifices. Thus a second decree had to cover the same regions, that is the entire Persian Empire. ***Sivan:*** This was eight months before the first decree was to be carried out. This decree was immediately drafted, sealed and sent throughout the Empire. The result was a victory for the Jews. ***People ... became Jews:*** The deliverance of the Jews was so spectacular that many were evidently persuaded that the God of the Jews was working for their survival. At least they understood that the Jews were now in favor with the king of the Empire, for they all learned that the queen was a Jew. The result was that a great many people became proselytes.

Chapter 9

DELIVERANCE OF THE JEWS

9:1-17 ***Helped the Jews:*** Only those who were most prejudiced against the Jews dared to counter the decree of Mordecai that allowed the Jews to defend themselves. The officials of the Empire actually aided the Jews in defending themselves against their cultural enemies. With this help from the civic officials and army leaders, it is easy to understand how the Jews were able to overcome those who hated them. We must not assume that the hate of Haman for the Jews was the attitude of all the citizens of the Empire. The fact that others helped the Jews to survive indicates that Haman had a personal vendetta against the Jews. His hate was not copied by others who possibly understood the true reason why he was trying to eliminate the Jews from among the people. In the capital of Shushan, 800 of the enemies of the Jews died. This included the ten sons of Haman. Their bodies were displayed on the gallows that were previously prepared by their father for the hanging of Mordecai. We must understand that the Jews had been placed in a situation where they had to fight for their lives. Fathers had to take up arms in order to defend their homes. ***They did not lay their hand on the spoil:*** The fact that it is mentioned in the text that the Jews did not plunder those they overcame, is evidence of the fact that this was not a battle that would prosper them materially. It was a self defense struggle for their own survival. Who received the spoil is not revealed. We only assume that the spoil went to the Empire. We must always keep in mind that it was in the providence of God that the Jews survive until the coming of the Messiah. In this particular incident in history, the interest of God would have been in the Jews who were living in Judah at the time the decree of genocide went out to all the Persian Empire. Judea was included as one of the 127 provinces, and thus the existence of the returned remnant of Jews in the region was at stake. God's purpose was that the nation of Israel exist at the time of the coming of the Messiah in order that the world know that He had fulfilled all His promises to the seed of Abraham. We would conclude, therefore, that the book of Esther was included in the canon of Old Testament Scriptures in order to reveal to us how God continued to work with Israel in captivity in order to protect His chosen people until the arrival of the Messiah. He preserved them as a remnant in order to receive the Messiah.

THE FEAST OF PURIM

9:18-32 ***A day of feasting and rejoicing:*** In the other provinces the Jews assembled and won their victories in one day, the thirteenth day. But in Shushan they assembled and fought for two days for deliverance. In both locations the quick victory was a sign that God was truly fighting for the Jews for their survival. We must not forget that the survival of a remnant of the Jews was necessary in order that the promises made to the fathers be fulfilled in the coming Messiah and Savior of the world. The book of Esther is not simply a book for modern Jews to read and rejoice over during the day of Purim. It is a book that plays a very important role in the Christian's understanding that God was providentially preserving the seedline of David in order that the Messiah and Savior of the world be born into the world in fulfillment of the promises that were made to the fathers (See Gn 12:1-4).

If the promises were not fulfilled, then the world would question whether the promises were truly made by God. Mordecai wrote another decreed and sent it throughout the land that the fourteenth and fifteenth of the month Adar would be a time of celebration. This time would correspond to February/March according to our calendar. It would be a time of celebrating the deliverance of the Jews from their enemies. Purim thus became a holiday of the Jews throughout their generations, though the day was not a date set forth in the Sinai law. The feast of Purim was a day of rejoicing and manifestation of thanksgiving by the giving of presents to the poor and friends. The feast defines the theme of the book of Esther (See 3:7; 9:24ff). Though not a part of the Sinai law, the feast became a very significant celebration for the Jews. It is mentioned in the apocryphal books (Additions to Esther 10:10-

13; 2 Maccebees 15:36). There is no reference to the feast in the New Testament. Some have supposed that the feast mentioned by John in reference to Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in John 5:1 was Jesus' observance of the feast of Purim. But this view should be rejected since there is no emphasis on the feast in the New Testament, nor is there any mention that the feast was an occasion for the Jews to journey to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the feast of Purim has been a precious feast of celebration that has been enjoyed by the Jews throughout their history. Because of various persecutions the Jews have endured throughout the centuries, the book of Esther as been the symbol of encouragement and survival for the Jews. For the Christian, the events of the book of Esther remind us that God was working in history in order to bring about His purpose for the existence of the nation of Israel. That purpose was to bring the Savior into the world through the seedline of Abraham.

Chapter 10
ADVANCEMENT OF MORDECAI

10:1-3: The greatness of Esther is found in the greatness of Mordecai. In her time of trial when she was to take a stand for that which was true, it was Mordecai who gave her courage to go before the king. Though there is no mention of God in the book, the lives of these two heroes of faith certainly portray the life-style of the godly. It is as if the writer of the book wants us to sit back and deduct from their behavior that God was certainly working in the outcome of events. If this was indeed the purpose of the writer in making no mention of the faith of both Mordecai and Esther, then we would conclude that he accomplished his purpose. The writer assumes that we have the rest of the history books of national Israel, and thus, he wants us to place Esther and Mordecai into God's plan to preserve His people, the seedline of Abraham, in order that we conclude that He is faithful to His promises. The book closes by giving credit to Mordecai for the origin of Esther's strength. We would conclude that Mordecai's strength originated from His faith in the God who works in the lives of His people. Because Mordecai remained true to this principles, he, as Daniel and his friends, was exalted in the kingdom in order to continue his influence of the king and the destiny of the people of God. Even in these closing verses of the book, Mordecai does not let his greatness in the King's court change his character. He remained true to his principles. Great men are identified by their willingness to maintain their principles regardless of the social status in which they find themselves. Great men of God do not let society form or change their principles. They seek to change society through their principles. Their strength is found in God, and thus, when society goes wrong, they stay close to God. They remain a beacon of hope in times of despair, as Mordecai became such at a crucial time in the history of Israel. Throughout the history of the people of God, there will always be the need for people as Esther and Mordecai to lead our way. From this book we conclude that it was Esther's providential destiny to be who she was, and in her position before the King, to play her part in God's eternal plan of redemption. As an orphan child, she could have offered many excuses not to take ownership of her destiny. But because of the encouragement of her uncle, she concluded, with Mordecai, that she was who she was, and where she was, for the purpose of God's work among men.

Job

This is the primary book in the Bible that deals with the problem of human suffering, specifically the suffering of the righteous. Though introduced and concluded in prose writing, the book was written as a poetical story with Job as the leading character. God and Satan stand as opposing figures between good and evil, with God being accused by Satan of not allowing His children to suffer the full extent of what he can inflict upon them. In answer to Satan's accusation, he is subsequently given a chance by God to unleash calamity in the life of Job. The suffering that Satan subsequently brought into the life of Job was for the purpose of convincing us that the righteous, as Job, can remain faithful in the presence of great personal suffering.

Because the theme of the book focuses on the suffering of the righteous, we conclude that God wanted it to be a part of the Old Testament canon in order to aid His people to remain faithful during times of suffering. Since the meeting between God and Satan seems unique, and Job a unique character of history in whose life the drama of the story was played out, we assume that this book was an addition to the Scriptures for the purpose of dealing with the suffering of the saints.

In order to teach the theme of the book, the book introduces four other characters. The three friends, Eliphaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuah, and Zophar of Na'ameh, come forth in order to convince Job that he has done some sin in his life that would justify God bringing calamity upon him. Their world view of life is that misfortune comes as a direct result of sin, and thus there must be some sin in Job's life for God to cause such great calamity in his life. They thus connected sin and suffering in order to motivate Job to confess the supposed sin that was in his life, and then repent before God.

A fourth character in the narrative is young Elihu. Elihu remained silent throughout the three friends' discussions with Job, and Job's subsequent responses. However, in his outrage he could no longer hold his peace. He thus unleashed his judgments upon Job because the three friends failed to convince him of his sin. Elihu was not answered by Job, for he offered no new arguments than what the friends had already stated.

In the final chapters of Job's speeches, he complained to God about his suffering. In response, God answered

Job out of a storm. In His answer, God did not give Job a specific reason for his suffering. He answered Job indirectly by pointing out His awesome power and majesty that was displayed in the created universe. He humbled Job by reassuring him that He had all things under control. God reminded Job that he would be presumptuous to think that he could in any way as a man be qualified to offer better judgments than God. The final conclusion of God's answer to Job was that if He could create and sustain such a great universe, then certainly He was in control of all things. Job, as well as we, must thus maintain our silence in times of suffering and trust in God who is in control of the universe.

Throughout all the drama that took place in Job's life, he did not sin with his lips (Jb 2:10). As a reward for his faithfulness throughout the calamity of his life, God gave him an additional 140 years of life, plus restitution in double of his possessions that he had lost, with more sons and daughters. He was given both in order that his influence have a greater impact on society.

WRITER

Both Ezekiel and James mention Job as a historical character (Ez 14:20; Js 5:11). However, there is no identification of the writer of the book within the text. Suggestions of authorship have included Job and Moses. But it is unlikely that either is the author. Because the writer used the Israelites' covenant word for God, Yahweh, the book could have been written after the captivity of Israel in Egypt. However, the events of the book probably occurred before the history of national Israel.

The nationality of Job is not certain. We are not told if he was a Jew or a Gentile. Some have asserted that he was an Israelite, though this assumption is questioned. Except for the prologue and epilogue that were written in prose, the covenant the word Yahweh is used only a few times. References that are used to refer to Deity are the common terms that were used by other religious people prior to the existence of national Israel. Job could have been a Gentile, for he lived in Uz (Edom) which was a land of the East (1:3). However, because the book was included in the Old Testament canon of Scriptures, it is argued that Job was of Abrahamic descent, though not necessarily one who lived during the time of Israel's existence when the Israelites were in the land of Palestine.

DATE

There is no way we can determine the date of writing for this book. Bible students have suggested dates anywhere from the 18th century to the 3rd century B.C. It is assumed that Job lived prior to the development of the nation of Israel in Egyptian captivity, which would be sometime during the age of the patriarchs. This time is proposed because of the age of Job. In addition to his age at the time of his trials, God added another 140 years, making his life far greater than many of his contemporaries. He could have been close to 200 years old when he died. There is no evidence of people living this long after the time of Abraham.

Job's practices concerning the sacrifices also places his existence before the giving of the law to Israel at Mt. Sinai after the Egyptian captivity. He offered sacrifices for his family which was characteristic with the patriarchs. There is no mention of sacrifices being made according to the law that was given to Israel. Though Job may have lived during the time of the patriarchs, the writing could have been later, though the date of writing cannot be determined in reference to the nation of Israel, or the writing of other sacred literature.

BOOK

Regardless of our knowledge of who the author was, his literary work in writing the book has been his legacy. It is one of the greatest poetic compositions of literature of ancient times. Of all literary treasures that have survived time, Job has to be at the top of the list for poetic excellence and content.

The unique nature of this book has led some to question the existence of a man named Job. But reference to him in Ezekiel 14:14 and James 5:11 is the Holy Spirit's testimony of his existence. The author was given special revelation concerning the discourse between God and Satan in the heavenly realm (See chs 1,2). Since the book was written primarily in Hebrew poetry, we would assume that the historical events occurred in the life of a man named Job, but were written as a poetical narrative for the sake of the readers who were Israelites.

Since the theme of the book deals with the problem of the suffering of the righteous, the unknown writer sought to use a real life case in order to teach this theme. Because it is written in Hebrew poetry, therefore, we must not assume that the characters are fictitious, or that the book is not inspired. Job, and the events that surrounded his life, may have been orally passed down to the Israelites, with the eventual inscription of the narrative taking place during the history of Israel or prior to the reign of Solomon.

One of the difficulties in translating the book is the ancient nature and condition of existing manuscripts. The manuscripts that exist are often difficult to read, and thus translators have had to add some conjectural assumptions to the meaning of various words of the text. Added to the challenge of translation is the fact that some Hebrew words in the book are found nowhere else in the Bible. It is for this reason that different trans-

lations will have different readings in some areas. Archaeological discoveries of artifacts that contain writing of sister languages of the times has helped in this matter. But the fact remains that translators had to resort to some conjectural renditions when translating various words of the text.

Prologue
(1:1 – 3:26)

Outline: (1) The fame of Job (1:1-5), (2) Satan tries Job (1:6 – 2:10), (3) Job's friends (2:11-13), (4) Job laments his birth (3:1-26)

Chapter 1
THE FAME OF JOB

1:1-5 ***Job:*** Though difficult to determine, the possible meaning of this name is "to return" or "to repent." ***Uz:*** This land was possibly in Aram and bordered Edom and Arabia (Compare Gn 10:23; Jr 25:23). ***Perfect and upright:*** Though he admitted the fallibility that is common with all men, Job did not live hypocritically before God (Mt 6:22; At 2:46; see Ps 12:2). He desired to focus on God throughout his life (2:9,10; 27:5). ***His substance:*** During these times, a great family and many possessions were viewed as an indication of God's favor of a person. If the family and possessions were taken away, then it was concluded that God was displeased with the person because of some sin. ***Each one on his day:*** This could refer to a special birthday feast for each family member, or it could refer to each family member hosting a feast in rotation with the other families. ***Offered burnt offerings:*** Burnt offerings were a command of God since the day of the sin of Adam and Eve. We would not assume, therefore, that these offerings were an indication that Job was an Israelite who was living under the Old Testament law. In this case he offered burnt offerings just in case sinful statements inadvertently slipped from the lips of his family.

SATAN TRIES JOB

1:6-12 This convening of heavenly beings in the presence of God was the opportunity for the cynical Satan to propose his scheme to the One who had all power. Satan is the adversary of humanity, and thus the one who seeks to destroy all that is good. ***Sons of God:*** These are the created angels of God (See Cl 1:16; compare Jb 5:1; 15:15). They are His messengers who carry out His will of ministry among His people on earth (33:23). As created beings by Jesus (Cl 1:16), they were present when the universe was created (38:7). ***Satan came:*** The word "satan" means "adversary" (See Mt 12:24; 1 Pt 5:8). The text reads "the satan," thus indicating that he also was in the heavenly court as a heavenly being. Use of the word "also" seems to indicate that Satan took this opportunity to bring his challenge before God in order to test Job. The testing of Job must be considered a unique event in that God allowed Satan to specifically bring calamity into the life of Job. The righteous needed a testimony to the faithfulness of one who remained faithful before God in the midst of great suffering. They needed a testimony that no amount of suffering in this life is a valid reason to turn from God (See comments Rm 8:18). ***From where do you come:*** God knew what Satan was doing, and from where he had come. This question was only a means of introduction to receive the challenge that God knew he would propose concerning Job. ***To and fro on the earth:*** This statement would assume that Satan went from one place to another, and thus he is not omnipresent as God who is at all places at all times. Satan goes to places in order to generate the degradation of humanity. Once he has started the process of social degradation, he moves on to other places. Once Satan has started the process of social degeneration, it is man who continues to carry out the work of Satan. ***My servant Job:*** Job was singled out because of his prominent righteous leadership among men. This would emphasize the importance of leaders to maintain a reputation for good among the people. If they stand morally firm, then the people are encouraged to remain righteous before God. ***Does Job fear God for nothing:*** This presents the proposition that must be tested in the discussions that take place between Job and his friends. The friends will assume that serving God pays off in material blessings. And if the blessings do not come, or are taken away, then it is assumed that one is not righteous before God. The conclusion to Job's argument will be that material blessings are not the direct payment by God for service to Him, though in the case of Job, God restored what he had lost, plus more. But the three friends' argument that material blessings are given directly by God to those who serve Him, is not a biblical truth. Millions of saints of the world live in great poverty. They are poor, as the Macedonian saints, though they serve with faithfulness (2 Co 8:1-4). God does not buy the loyalty of His saints with material things. ***In your power:*** It must be noted in the text that God relinquishes supernatural power to Satan. Satan could not function against God's saints in a miraculous manner without being granted power from God. This significant point is brought out in the second encounter between God and Satan when God said that Satan had moved Him against Job (2:3). God gives Satan power to work against Job, but this power is still limited by God. Satan could not take Job's life.

1:13-22 In his initial challenge of the integrity of Job, Satan took away his personal possessions. If Job thought that his possessions had been given to him directly by God, then Satan assumed that Job would complain against God. The Sabeans were an Arabian people who lived in the southwestern part of Arabia, the area of modern day Yemen. The Chaldeans were evidently traders who were marauders. In conducting trade between their homeland east of Arabia and Egypt to the south, they raided people along the way. ***Your sons and your daughters:*** The last calamity that was inflicted on Job was the destruction of his posterity. No heir was left to carry on his name, or his material prosperity. Thus Satan's attack against Job was complete. Job had lost all his possessions and family, except for his wife. ***Tore ... shaved ... worshiped:*** The reaction of Job manifested remorse, humility and subjection to the will of God (See Is 15:2; Jr 7:29; Ez 7:18; Am 8:10). ***Blessed***

be the name: Job did not associate that which he possessed as a reward for his faithfulness to God. The greatness of his faith was manifested through his separation between possessions and his faith in God. He thus blessed God and did not curse Him for the calamity that had befallen him. In times of great trial, therefore, the true nature of one's faith is manifested. ***Nor blamed God foolishly:*** This statement must be remembered throughout the book. Throughout his trials, no foolish attack against God came from the mouth of Job. Job did complain to God when his friends came to him with erroneous arguments that were based on the theology of the day. But Job did not follow the advice of his wife that he curse God and die.

Chapter 2

2:1-10 ***Perfect and an upright man:*** This second scene of a heavenly encounter between God and Satan repeats the content of the previous discussion. Satan's challenge in this second discussion with God was founded on the fact that Job passed the first test. He remained faithful regardless of the removal of his possessions and family. Satan now sought to focus on the physical body of Job. ***You moved Me against him:*** Satan has no supernatural power. All supernatural power rests with God, for God created all things, including Satan (Cl 1:16). The statement that Satan moved God against Job clearly manifests this teaching that is maintained throughout the Bible. Only God has power over the supernatural. Only He can work miraculous happenings. And in this case, it was the power of God that was given to Satan on this particular occasion in order that Satan do his deed against Job. Satan was a created angel of God who fell. That which was created cannot have the power of the One who creates. All supernatural beings were created by God, and thus do not have the power of the Creator. All supernatural power originates from God, and thus is controlled by God. If God had not delegated power to Satan he could have done nothing in reference to taking away Job's possessions, family, and inflicting his body. ***Skin for skin:*** This is an ancient proverbial saying that cannot be determined. However, the meaning could possibly be understood to refer to Satan's statement, *"All that a man has he will give for his life."* And true this is. Men will give all their possessions in order to retain their health. The desire of men to continue life is stronger than the desire to maintain wealth. ***Boils:*** This term that is commonly used by interpreters probably does not fully define the Hebrew word *shehim*. Deuteronomy 28:35 seems to indicate that this was a malady that affected the skin. It could have been leprosy, though it is difficult to determine exactly what the ailment was. The ailment caused intense itching and suffering on the part of Job. It seems that the ailment disfigured him to the point that his approaching three friends did not initially recognize him (2:12; compare 7:4,5,14; 30:17,30). ***Curse God and die:*** Job's wife had also lost everything, and thus her security in life. Her statement here could be an indication of her frustration that she unleashed on her husband. And then, the statement could have been made in the desperation of the moment that there was nothing for which Job could now live, and thus death would be a merciful relief of his present suffering. ***Foolish:*** Whatever the motive behind the statement of his wife, Job considered it foolish. He would not so sin by his mouth, regardless of the calamity into which he had fallen. ***Will we not receive evil:*** It is often the foolishness of men to praise God in good times, but curse Him in bad times. Such was deemed foolishness by Job. As a believer, Job knew that he had to accept the bad with the good in reference to having faith in God. Life was not all good for the believer.

JOB'S FRIENDS

2:11-13 Eliphaz came from Teman, an area that is generally referred to as Edom (See Gn 36:4,10-12; Jr 49:7). Bildad came from Shuah, an area that is commonly believed to be southeast of Palestine (Gn 25:1-6). Zophar came from Na'ameh, an area in the northwest of Arabia. ***Seven days:*** The friends did not first recognize Job. His ailment had disfigured his appearance. They were so overcome by his ailment that they tore their clothes and sprinkled dust on their heads. In sympathy with his situation, they said nothing for seven days.

Chapter 3

JOB LAMENTS HIS BIRTH

3:1-10 After seven days, and in despair because of his situation, Job broke the silence by cursing the day he was born. He wished that God would forget his birthday, and that his existence be forgotten. He wished that everything that caused darkness would conceal his birth, and thus it not be known to man. He even wished that the night of his conception would have had no joy, for he would not have come to his suffering if he had not been conceived and born. ***Let those who curse:*** Job even calls on the mythology of his day to come forth and curse all that pertained to his existence.

3:11-19 Continuing from the time of his birth, Job lamented his birth, thinking it would have been better to have been stillborn, than to survive birth. In his misery he believed it would have been better if he were stillborn, or he had died from malnutrition than to survive for the misery he endured. In death, kings, counsellors and princes rest from their burdens of leadership. If he could suffer death, he too would be at rest from his burdens. Even prisoners are free in prison from those who oppressed them outside prison. In death the slave is free from the demands of his master. What is significant during his calamity is the fact that Job never thought about suicide, for he understood that it was God who gives and takes.

3:20-26 Job wondered why life would be given to one who would suffer as much as he. He asked why the righteous should suffer. This proposition is to be answered by the experience of Job. At the end of Job's ordeal, God never gave him a direct answer for the cause of his suffering. In the conclusion of the drama of his life, God stated that in His majesty He has everything in control. Though the righteous might have to endure the greatest of sufferings, they must realize that God is working out His purpose for the existence of the world. In the final words of God in this majestic poem He would call on our faith in the fact that He is in control. Though Satan is introduced as an adversary in the life of the saint, the saint must

never forget that it is God who is controlling our existence and the existence of the universe. Since nothing that exists is outside the control of God, then God must be trusted to care for that which is in existence. Job, and ourselves as the readers, will understand this fact by the conclusion of the book.

Debate Over Suffering
(4:1 – 31:40)

Outline: (1) First cycle of speeches (4:1 – 14:22), (2) Second cycle of speeches (15:1 – 21:34), (3) Third cycle of speeches (22:1 – 31:40)

Chapter 4
FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES

4:1-6 ***Eliphaz:*** Since Eliphaz was the first to speak, it is assumed that he was the oldest of the three friends, or possibly considered to be the wisest. He began his response to Job in a gentle and respectful manner. Nevertheless, he felt that Job's outburst of complaint could not go unanswered. He thus chided Job for being impatient. He reminded Job that he had given comfort to others by strengthening the feeble knees. Now that Job had feeble knees, Eliphaz accused Job that he had forgotten his own advice to others. ***Your fear:*** The fear of God was the beginning of wisdom (1:9; Ex 14:31; Lv 19:14,32; 25:17; Ec 12:13). Job reverenced God, and thus this should be his confidence before God.

4:7-11 ***Who, being innocent, has perished:*** This is the premise upon which the three friends based their arguments. The premise was based on the belief in the religious culture that God materially rewarded the righteous, but withheld from the unrighteous. Those who lived in an evil manner would reap evil. Their conclusion, therefore, was that there was sin somewhere in the life of Job because of all the evil that had come upon him. The wicked here were thus compared to the lion. Though the lion had a great roar and was fierce, when his teeth were broken, he starved to death. The whelps then scatter and starve because they had no provider of food. It is in this way that the wicked are destroyed. The application is that Job, the lion, has been broken and is facing destruction.

4:12-21 ***Secretly brought to me:*** It was not that a spirit revealed something to him. The language here is not as prophets who were inspired by God through visions (See Jr 1:4; 2:1,4). What is stated here indicates that Eliphaz had an inspiring thought in the night. Eliphaz argued that Job was a good man, but in his argument to God, Job must not consider himself righteous before God because of his good deeds. He argued that even the angels cannot be compared to the righteousness of God, and thus are charged with folly in comparison to the purity of God. If angels are not considered perfect before God, then certainly mortal man, who is the product of clay, should not be considered perfect before God. As a moth, man's life on earth is crushed and he passes away. He perishes into obscurity. ***Tent cord:*** In death man is plucked up as a tent peg. That which he has acquired in life is torn from him by death. In death, no one takes anything from beyond the grave.

Chapter 5

5:1-7 ***Call now:*** The challenge is that there is no one who will hear Job's complaint against God. Everyone had turned away from Job. ***Holy ones:*** Or, angels. Job could not even turn to those who were commissioned by God to aid the righteous on earth. Eliphaz chided Job that there was no one to help him. The indication is that the three friends believed that God was distant from man, and thus could not be approached. ***Taking root:*** If Job continued to fret concerning his condition, then certainly he would make it worse. ***Crushed in the gate:*** Judgments were sought from the elders who were at the gates of the cities. Thus the children of the wicked had no security from the elders, for the elders would make judgments against them. ***Hunger ... thorns ... schemer:*** The hungry steal the crops of the wicked, which crops struggled to survive among the thorns. Deceivers scheme to relieve the wicked of their possessions. ***Man is born for trouble:*** It is not the physical environment in which man lives that produces the trouble. It is man himself who must take responsibility for the trouble that he creates for himself. The fact that man lives in an environment where he is free to make choices makes him responsible for the choices that he makes.

5:8-16 Since Eliphaz concluded that Job's suffering was the direct result of some sin in his life, he proposed the cure. Job must now seek God in order to be relieved of his suffering. Since the Lord lifts up those who are fallen, and providentially works in the lives of those who seek Him, then the solution for Job's problems was that he turn to the Lord. At the same time, Eliphaz argued, God would work against the wicked in order to bring calamity into their lives.

5:17-27 ***Binds up ... makes whole:*** God must be trusted in affliction because He strengthens the righteous and heals their affliction. From this premise, Eliphaz listed several things that God does for the righteous. ***Six ... seven:*** These numbers are symbolic. The number six is a large number, but must be perfected by seven. In the text, Eliphaz listed several trying situations that could come upon the righteous. If the righteous endured, then they would be in peace and have a great number of children in their old age. His conclusion was that Job should listen to this tried and tested advice in order to deliver himself from his affliction. The irony of Eliphaz's argument is that he argued from an erroneous proposition against Job whom he thought was wrong. But in the end, Job was blessed with many children and rewarded with double possessions because he was right. Eliphaz was wrong.

Chapter 6

6:1-7 It is at this time in the narrative when Job justified his complaint. In justifying his complaints about his existence, he defended himself against the accusations of his friends. He had no cause for complaint other than the possibility of some sin in his life. He asserted that his friends saw only the calamity of his life, and thus accused him unjustly. If the friends could only see the totality of his suffering, Job argued, then they would conclude that he was not complaining without cause. ***Arrows of the Almighty:*** Job felt that God had launched this attack against him, but he could not understand why. In his

misery, Job did not recognize that in the case of the suffering of His people, God too feels for their misfortune. God is not mean in that He personally brings calamity on His people. In the case of Job, it was Satan who was personally bringing calamity into the life of Job. Job, as well as all God's people, must realize that they live in a fallen world that is marred by sin. It was the consequence of sin that we must live in a fallen world (Compare Rm 5:12). It is the consequence of man's sin in general that causes us to reap the fruits of a world controlled by sin. ***Bray ... low:*** Job justified his right to complain. As braying and lowing are the results of dissatisfaction in the life of an animal, so he claimed the right to voice his dissatisfaction in reference to his predicament. ***Soul:*** Job used this word to refer to that which desires or has an appetite for what is beyond the physical world. He said he had a right to desire happiness in his existence in life. When denied happiness in life, he felt he had a right to complain to God.

6:8-13 After justifying his right to complain, Job continued with his plea for death to bring him peace. Since his flesh was not as rocks or bronze, then he wondered how much longer he could endure his present physical state. Since he had no more hope in life and no purpose, then he concluded that there was no reason for life to continue. Hope is that which brings purpose to life (Compare Rm 8:24,25).

6:14-23 Job thought his friends came to console. But he discovered that they came to be critics of his life. They kicked him while he was down. It seems that his predicament in life had been the opportunity for them to unleash their jealousy concerning his former prosperity. ***Deceitfully:*** Because his friends came as critics, instead of comforters, they had worked deceitfully as friends, for true friends would not say against a friend that which the three were saying against Job. ***Caravans:*** His disappointment in his friends was portrayed as those in trading caravans who followed a path that was to lead to water. But the path led to despair, for there was no water awaiting thirsty souls.

6:24-30 Job did not seek financial help from his friends. Nor did he seek deliverance from an enemy. Thus he expected that his friends who came to him would bring words of comfort and exhortation. With such words he could have better endured his suffering. So because his friends brought only words of judgment, he too had resorted to such words in order to counter the accusations that were made against him. ***My cause is righteous:*** Job asked his friends to reconsider his right to complain about his calamity. He asked for their consideration of his position that his calamity was not the direct result of some sin in his life. Wicked men do reap what they sow (Gl 6:7,8). But in the case of Job, Job was not reaping from what he had sown in wickedness. Though he did not understand the reason for his plight, he knew that as a righteous man before God he was reaping beyond the normal amount of suffering that befell the righteous.

Chapter 7

7:1-10 As Job continued his discourse into this chapter, he still felt that death was an option in order to be delivered from his suffering. ***Days of a hireling:*** Job bemoaned his existence, comparing it to the hard labor of a slave. His life was empty and without hope. As a cloud, it was vanishing away and headed for the grave. The dead do not return to the living, he said, and thus the dead are forgotten by the living. When one dies, he is soon forgotten, not even being remembered by grandchildren and great grandchildren.

7:11-21 Because of the futility of the existence of life, Job justified his speaking out in the anguish of his despair. In his complaint, he turned from speaking to his friends, to laying his case directly before God. He asked if he were some monster of the sea that must be controlled in order not to bring destruction. He found no comfort in sleep, for he was plagued with nightmares. He felt that death was his only hope of relief. He questioned why God would allow him to live since his plight was so miserable in life. He felt that God was constantly afflicting him, and thus questioned why he was tormented every moment. ***Have I sinned:*** Job wondered why such great affliction would come from any sin that he might have committed. If his calamity were the result of some sin, then the sin would have had to be great and thus known by him. But if he had sinned, Job questioned why God had not forgiven him of his sin. ***You will seek me:*** Job still saw God as a God of love. He pled that God seek him out urgently before he died. ***No longer be:*** Job seems to believe that if he did die, he would be beyond the reach of God. While at the point of death, therefore, in his despair he begged for God to come for him lest he pass away from God in death.

Chapter 8

8:1-7 ***Bildad:*** Bildad now reacts to the discourse of Job. As a traditionalist, he felt that Job was being irreverent toward God. Thus in his anger, he rebuked Job for what he said in the last speech. Since Job had assumed that he was right (6:29,30), Bildad argued that Job had wrongly assumed that God was unjust by afflicting him. Bildad's argument was based on the premise that the calamity of Job's life came as a result of sin on the part of Job. Since Job had argued that man is shaped in life by unbearable trials that are brought on him by God (7:1-7,17,18), Bildad affirmed that God was just in whatever He did in the life of man. His assumptions were based on the general belief of all three friends, that God rewards the righteous, but brings calamity on the wicked. And in the case of Job, he assumed that there was still some sin in Job's life that warranted the calamity that he was experiencing. ***Does God pervert judgment:*** This was the premise upon which Bildad based his argument against Job. Since God is the Almighty, then everything that comes from Him is just. Man has no right to question his plight since God would not deal unjustly with man. In Job's case, God's judgment was just because he assumed that there was some sin in the life of Job that deserved the just judgment of God. ***If your children have sinned against Him:*** Though hypothetical in the statement, Bildad was saying that the death of Job's children had to be the result of some sin that was in their lives. The severity of the sin was determined by the severity of the punishment. In making this assertion, therefore, Bildad was harsh with Job in that he turned to prove his proposition by using the death

of Job's children. ***If you would diligently seek God:*** Bildad called for Job's repentance. If he would repent, Bildad concluded, then God would restore Job's blessings beyond what he had. We must not forget that Bildad's premise for these statements was wrong. Blessings do not come directly in life from God according to the righteousness of man. God does not reward faithfulness with riches. Though God restored family and possessions to Job after his suffering (42:10-17), they were not restored as a result of repentance on the part of Job. Job never understood, as we, that his suffering was the direct result of Satan's specific request to God that he test Job. Therefore, he was not given an answer as to why God blessed him double after the time of suffering. Believers must not assume that they will be blessed in riches after they go through great suffering. The existence of the great number of poor believers in the world who suffer greatly is an illustration of this truth.

8:8-10 ***Past generations:*** Bildad challenged Job to consider the past experiences of man that would confirm his exhortations that he was giving to Job. Bildad asserted that he was right simply because the advice he was giving was found in the traditional teachings of the society in which they all lived. However, his assumption was wrong because the antiquity of teaching does not prove that a particular teaching is right. He was wrong in assuming that the life experiences of one man could be trusted, and thus established as truth. He was thus wrong in accusing Job that his personal life experiences could not be trusted because of his present suffering. Job, therefore, must rely on the accumulation of traditional life experiences that had been handed down from the fathers.

8:11-22 ***Papyrus:*** This plant grows while in the presence of water. But when the water is taken away, it withers. Bildad's application was that men wither and die when they take themselves from the presence of God. So is the life of the profane person whose house is as weak as a spider's web. ***Green before the sun:*** Man's life is as a green plant. While alive, the plant spreads its roots or vines among the rocks in order to survive. But when dead, it is no longer remembered and another plant takes its place. In his application to the circumstances of Job, Bildad found hope. At least Job had not yet died for some sin he may have committed that brought on his calamity. If he repented, then God would reward him with things over which he could rejoice and a family that would restore laughter to his life. ***Those who hate you:*** Bildad was unknowingly prophetic in this statement. He did not realize that in the end of the drama of Job's ordeal, he himself would be one of those who was clothed in shame.

Chapter 9

9:1-13 ***I know that it is so:*** Job knew that the wicked suffer as a result of their sinful actions. There was some truth in the argument of Eliphaz and Bildad, but the punishment for sinful actions is not directly from God. Sinful actions generally reap the whirlwind of consequences as men violate physical and moral laws of the environment in which they live (See comments Gl 6:7-10). ***How should a man be just before God:*** This was Job's question to the friends. Since no one is free from committing sin, then no man can stand just before God (Rm 3:23). No man can present himself innocent before God. If men would plead their case before God on the premise of innocence, then there is no possible way to win in such a legal contention. No one can harden himself against God and prosper. It is impossible to reason from the viewpoint of the fallibility of man in order to win in a contest against Him who has created and controls all things. ***Bear, Orion and the Pleiades:*** God is the creator of these constellations of stars. ***Chambers:*** These would possibly be constellations of stars in the southern sky. ***He goes by:*** Because we are limited by our five senses, and to the physical world, we cannot perceive the presence of God who is spirit. With our five senses it is impossible to reach into the supernatural world. Job's conclusion was that God's goings were beyond the perception of man. God's omnipotence and omnipresence make it impossible for man in any way to be in contention with God. God is the final moral standard, and thus man's moral standards are not to be compared with God. Our standards are to be established by God. ***Not turn back His anger:*** No one can change the final destination that God has established for the end of the history of man. If God works specifically in the case of one as Job, then individuals cannot terminate His plan. If the allies of the proud have no hope of determining the will of God, then Job reasons that there is no possible way for him to do so.

9:14-16 ***How much less will I answer Him:*** In other words, Job says he could not refute God if God had a charge against him. If one were to make a defense before God, then he would certainly choose his words carefully. If one were legally righteous before God, then he would still be overpowered by the awesome nature of God. If one would have a discussion with God, then he could only approach God with humble supplications. Even then Job said he would be surprised if God would even consider this plea. Job's point is that God is so great in comparison to man that we wonder why He would even consider the plight of any one individual.

9:17-22 If one were in a discussion with God, Job here expressed hopelessness trying to win any debate. If one approached God with strength, then he would be crushed. If one sought to justify himself before God, then he would be legally condemned because no man is without sin before God (Rm 3:23). Job's point was that though man would approach unto God with perfection, he would still be only as a breath of wind that quickly vanishes away. The Greeks invented gods after their own imaginations. They were gods with whom they could devise schemes. But the true God is not manipulated by the whims of man. The Greeks manipulated their gods with their minds. The one true and living God establishes ways to which the minds of man must conform.

9:23-26 God is indiscriminate in reference to His destruction of men. His wrath can be poured out on both the righteous and wicked. Job asserted that the world had been given over to the wicked. He then affirmed that since God was in control of the world, He was responsible for the condition of the world. If this were not the case, reasoned Job, then who is responsible? Though God would assume responsibility for the world, we must not forget that it was man through sin who

brought the world to its present state of degradation. But we must keep in mind that the theology of Job's day was different from our thinking that is based on more revelation from God. The general concept of evil and suffering in Job's day was based on the belief that all consequences came directly from God, because God was in control of all things. We must keep in mind that Job's theology was not inspired. He reflected much of the thinking of the day, though not in agreement with his three friends. The words of Job were written by inspiration. But we need not think that his speeches in the cycles of discussion with the friends were revelation that was not already believed by those of his day. We now understand the whole plan of God's work to bring the Savior into the world, which plan was not known by Job. We now understand the purpose of the world, which purpose was not revealed in the days of Job. Job, therefore, could not express in his time that which we now know as a result of the full revelation of God. When he was speaking, he did not know that Satan had previously had a meeting with God specifically about his case. ***My days are swifter than a runner:*** At this point in the discussions, Job turned to the brevity of his life. He used three figures to portray this brevity. His life was fleeing away faster than a courier, swifter than the fastest ship, and quicker than the eagle that swoops down upon its prey.

9:27-35 Job knew that if he stopped his complaining he would still be held accountable for his behavior. If his attitude was changed to joy, this would not help his presentation before God. Even if he cleansed himself with pure snow, he still would not be innocent. If he were to cleanse himself, God would still plunge him into the filth of the ditch. Job remained true to his conviction that he was innocent before God, and thus he could not understand why God was dealing with him in such a manner. And because he knew that he would not stand innocent before God, he remained fearful when considering his complaints. So he was frustrated with the displeasure of God which he supposed God had been poured out upon him. When the book ends, Job will not be told of the heavenly meeting where Satan asked to unleash trials on him. God's only answer will be that man's faith in His control of all things must stand as the answer to the problem of suffering. God created the best of all possible environments for the habitation of a truly free moral individual. In this environment, suffering will be encountered. We must trust that God created the best environment to prepare individuals for heavenly dwelling.

Chapter 10

10:1-12 In chapter 9 Job affirmed his innocence regardless of the fact that it seemed that God was holding him accountable for something he did not know. In this chapter he seeks to find meaning for his life, regardless of the calamity that had befallen him. Though his understanding of God was limited, he reasoned from his limited understanding in order to determine the reason for his suffering. ***My soul is weary:*** He had nothing else to lose. Since death would bring relief, he encouraged himself to bring his charge before God. Since Job had by this time reasoned that he was guilty of something, and with nothing else to lose, he was emboldened to bring his case before God. ***Is it good to ... oppress ... despise:*** In his despair, Job reasoned with God through the question of verse 3. He asserted that it was not logical for God to oppress that which He created, and at the same time shine with favor on the wicked. ***Have You eyes of flesh:*** God is spirit (Jn 4:24). He has no physical form, and thus He is not afflicted as a man. "Eyes" is a metaphor that refers to God's knowledge of Job's predicament. What puzzled Job was that he knew that God knew he was innocent, but at the same time, He afflicted him with great suffering. ***No one can deliver:*** If God chooses to inflict suffering, then all are hopeless and cannot be delivered. ***Yet You destroy me:*** Job's frustration was that he could not understand why the righteous suffer as he did. If God is the creator and omnipotent over all things, then he wondered why the righteous had to suffer. If God seeks good for his saints, and at the same time is all-powerful, then could He be benevolent if He does not take away the suffering? If He does not take away the suffering because He cannot, then He is not all-powerful. In this supposed contradiction, Job did not question the existence of an all-powerful and benevolent God. Out of his frustration, he only sought to understand the plan of God in reference to our existence and suffering. The answer to Job's supposed dilemma is in the fact that God can do all that can be done. He cannot create a truly free-moral being without allowing that being to live in an environment where choices can be made. And in order for that being to be truly free to make choices, then he cannot be hedged in or programmed as a robot. The wicked exist, therefore, because they have made choices of evil, which choices cause untold suffering and evil in the environment of the righteous. The conclusion is that God created the best of all possible environments for the existence of a truly free moral being. ***Bring me unto dust again:*** Even without the existence of written revelation, the creation of man out of dust was commonly known by Job's generation. In view of the origin of man from the dust of the earth, Job questioned why God would have created man in the first place. The answer is in the fact that God is a God of love. And in order for God to be loved by His creation, His creation must be truly free to say to God, "I love you, too." It is better to have lived in the presence of a loving God than never to have lived. "I-love-you-too" will eventually bring the righteous into eternal dwelling in the presence of God.

10:13-22 ***Hidden in Your heart:*** Job now seeks to understand the hidden purposes of God. What confused him was that regardless of his righteous living, he had to suffer such great calamity in his life. He was full of confusion because he sought to live righteously, but God seemed to hunt him down in order to afflict him. And when he was found, Job felt that God showed His presence with him through the suffering that He inflicted upon him. Job thus began to conclude that God's infliction of suffering in his life was His judgment that he was in some way guilty. If God had inflicted him because of some guilt, then he questioned why God created him in the first place. If the righteous suffer, then why was man even created by God? Paul gives the answer. *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us"* (Rm 8:18). We see

eternity only from the side of time on earth. God sees it from the side of eternal existence. Though we cannot earn heaven through perfect living or atonement through good works, the sufferings of a life of fifty or sixty years is little to pay for an eternal heaven in the presence of God. Unfortunately, Job viewed all things from the shadow side of the cross, whereas we are privileged to understand all things through the offering of Jesus. Because Job did not have knowledge of the cross, and yet remained faithful to God through all his sufferings, exemplifies his faith. His faithfulness brings judgment on those this side of the cross who fall from faith because of suffering, for we now have knowledge of all the spiritual blessings that are in Christ (Ep 1:3).

Chapter 11

11:1-6 ***Zophar:*** As both Eliphaz and Bildad, Zophar also came forth to defend the justice of God. In chapters 9 & 10 Job made strong claims of innocence. In doing so he motivated the three friends, specifically Zophar, to launch his verbal onslaught against Job. Zophar thought Job was full of talk because of his supposed ranting in his previous discourse. He believed that Job's words were full of lies and mockery of God. ***My doctrine is pure:*** It was against this claim that Zophar launched his disagreement with Job. Zophar reasoned that if only Job could see his sin, then he would understand that he was not only deserving of his present afflictions, but also grace from God. Zophar was a dogmatist. He had no proof of any sin in the life of Job, but still asserted his accusations against him.

11:7-12 It frustrated Zophar that Job had sought to investigate the nature of God. He believed that God was past finding out, and thus anyone who would seek to understand God was acting arrogantly as Job. Since God knew everything throughout the world, then it would be presumptuous on the part of man to understand God. ***He knows vain men:*** Job had claimed that God did not distinguish between the righteous and wicked when He inflicted suffering. Zophar disagreed with this. ***Empty-headed man:*** Zophar quoted this old proverb in verse 12. He applied it to Job because of Job's supposed arrogance in trying to understand God.

11:13-20 Zophar was direct, if not harsh, in his attack against Job. However, he felt that there was hope for Job, if only Job would repent and turn to God. He should turn from his wrong and humble himself before God. If Job would only stretch out his hands in prostrate submission to God, then he would be healed. If Job would so submit to God, then he would have hope. Many would then return to him for favor. On the other hand, the wicked will be swallowed up in death because they fail to repent.

Chapter 12

12:1-3 In his response to Zophar, Job resorted to sarcasm. His friends had claimed a special understanding and knowledge of God, but failed to point out the sin that would justify his suffering. In this speech of Job, therefore, Job was more fierce in his words toward his friends. He was also emboldened to lay his plea before God. Since God did not answer his inquiry, he sank further into despair. ***Wisdom will die with you:*** This supposed compliment of his friends was a sarcasm concerning their supposed greater knowledge of the ways of God. The irony of Job's encounter with his three friends was that they actually did not know God, or else they would have been merciful to him in his plight. They understood God only from the accepted view of the society in which they lived. Job knew God according to the circumstances of his life. The story of Job's life, therefore, was an encounter between the views of God that men had created after their own experiences and the true God who is revealed from heaven.

12:4-6 ***Mocked by his neighbor:*** Job had become a laughingstock by others because of his ordeal. Before his suffering, he had presented a life of righteousness before his neighbors. But because of his suffering, he had been cast into a pit of despair. ***A lamp despised:*** If righteous Job would suffer so, then his neighbors concluded that there was no gain in living righteously before God. If the wicked prosper, then Job reasoned that there was no gain in living righteously before God. His neighbors laughed, therefore, because they saw the supposed uselessness of his righteous living.

12:7-25 Job's friends gained their knowledge of God by observing the wonders of the physical world in which they lived (See comments Ps 8; Rm 1:20). The existence of the physical world, and the behavior of all organic life, testifies to the existence of God. The good that is in the world is indiscriminately given by God to all men because they live in God's created world. Both the righteous and wicked thus partake of the blessings of the world. But the logic of the friends of Job was flawed. It is true that all men partake of the good that is offered by the world, but it is not true that those who are righteous are dealt a greater amount of blessing than the wicked. God's rain falls on the field of both the righteous and wicked. If the righteous prospered above the wicked, then one would think that judges, kings, princes and elders would prosper more than the wicked. But even these officials are stripped and made fools by God.

Chapter 13

13:1-12 ***I also know:*** The three friends had no advantage over Job in reference to their knowledge of God. Because they had offered nothing new, Job felt that it was more profitable that he speak to God and not them. Since they were inventors of lies, and as physicians who are of no value to the sick, it would be profitable if he would address his complaints directly to God. The friends had spoken falsely because they claimed to be speaking on behalf of God. Job had thought that they would function as objective arbitrators between himself and God. But they took the side of the accuser. Without any evidence of Job's supposed sin, they cast their judgment upon him. ***If He should search you out:*** Job now believed that his friends were in danger before God. If God would hold them accountable for their speeches, he was convinced that they would stand guilty. At the end of the drama, this proved to be true because God called on Job to pray for his friends, and the friends themselves had to offer sacrifices for forgiveness concerning their sinful treatment of Job.

13:13-19 Job now turned to address God. ***Put my life in my hand:*** Since Job's answer to his misery was death, then without losing anything but his life, he turned to address God with his complaints. ***He will slay me:*** Since Job had lost all hope of surviving his ordeal, he was emboldened to speak his mind. What is significant here is that he maintained his faith regardless of possible death as a result of God's hand upon him. Job was determined to maintain his faithfulness regardless of the loss of his life. ***This also will be my salvation:*** No hypocrite or wicked person would dare to state his case before God. But Job's salvation was in the fact that he could state his case before God with a clear conscience. ***I know I will be justified:*** In the midst of such great despair, Job had hope that God would restore him to his former state. He trusted in a God of grace, though he had to endure at His hand. And for this reason, he was willing to take his case directly to God. He was so passionate about taking his case directly to God that he thought he would die if he did not.

13:20-28 In taking his case before God, Job first asked that God not terrify him to the point that he could not speak (See 9:34,35). Second, Job asked for a response from God in order to reaffirm that He heard his plea. ***Make known to me my transgression ... why hide Your face:*** Job was willing to die without changing his behavior before God because he was confident in his righteous behavior before God. If he died, he first wanted to know the sin that caused so much suffering to come into his life. If his friends were correct—that suffering is the direct result of God's punishment for our sins—then Job wanted to know the sin that caused him such great grief. ***Will You pursue:*** As a human, Job knew he was insignificant in comparison to God. And thus he wondered why God would pursue him, for such pursuit was like a man running after dry stubble. ***Iniquities of my youth:*** Job considered the fact that he may have committed some sin in his youth that he had forgotten, for which sin he was now being held accountable. Job now felt that he was in stocks, guarded by God who would not release him from either his misery or life. ***Decaying:*** His life was rotting away. He felt that God had brought him into the bondage of his sufferings, and thus he was as worthless as a moth-eaten garment.

Chapter 14

14:1-12 ***Born of a woman:*** Job continued the thought of the preceding chapter in that he wondered why man in his lowly state would be considered for special attention by God. Since man's life is so short, Job questioned why God would be so concerned with individuals who were as a blooming flower that soon passes away. Job reasoned that it would be beneath God to even consider significant any individual. He thus questioned why God would take any special notice of him. One important point that does come from the book of Job is the fact that God considers the importance of individuals. ***Clean ... or of an unclean:*** There is no one who stands righteous before God, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rm 3:23). Why would God, Job questioned, even consider a man worth all the effort that He was putting into his life. ***So that he may rest:*** If God's attention means suffering, then Job asked that God turn away from man in order that man enjoy some rest during his brief life. ***Hope for a tree:*** If a tree is cut down, it can grow again from its remaining roots. However, if a man is cut down in death, he will not come forth again. ***Until the heavens are no more:*** Ancient beliefs concerning life after death were vague. Job's statement here seems to indicate that those who rest in death will not rise out of their sleep until the heavens are no more (Compare 2 Pt 3:10-13). In the book of Job there is a vague understanding of death (See 3:12-19; 10:21,22; 14:20-22). However, later revelation in the Old Testament reveals that God's people will overcome death (See Ps 16:10; 49:15; 73:23-26).

14:13-22 ***If a man die will he live again:*** Job's belief in an eternal God would assume that he believed that after death man does not cease to exist. The fact that Job made this statement indicates that a concept of resurrection was a part of his theology. ***You sew up my iniquity:*** It could be that Job also believed that there would be a final accounting of the sins of man. The figure here indicates a final accounting of the acts of man. Regardless of any hope that might be expressed in these words, Job continued to portray the despair of life, and specifically the hopelessness of his life. The sufferings of this present world work against the hope of man. However, it is often a strong hope that gets one through hard times.

Chapter 15

SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES

15:1-16 ***Eliphaz:*** This discourse of Eliphaz takes the narrative into the second cycle of discussions between the three friends and Job. In the first cycle the friends thought that Job's problems were the cause of some sin in his life. They urged him to repent in order that his former blessings be restored by God. Job's insistence on his innocence led them to believe that he was being arrogant, if not blasphemous against God. In this second cycle of speeches the friends have come to believe that Job is stubborn and arrogant, for he will not follow their advice to repent. In order to move him to confess his sin, they use strong language. In this leading speech of Eliphaz, Eliphaz is convinced that Job is being stubborn in his refusal to respect their advice that he repent. ***Vain knowledge:*** Eliphaz was convinced that Job's defenses were signs of his arrogance and unwillingness to repent. He accused Job of thinking that his wisdom was superior to that which he and the friends had, for the friends stood behind the wisdom that had come from the old men. ***East wind:*** Eliphaz accused that Job had filled himself with the hot east winds. He accused him of unprofitable talk that would lead to no good. Eliphaz believed, therefore, that Job had condemned himself with his own words. ***Consolations of God:*** In an earlier speech, Eliphaz claimed to have received some revelation from God on this matter (4:12-17). And thus in this speech Eliphaz accused Job of rejecting the counsel of God that he had given. ***Eyes flash:*** Eliphaz judged Job's character. Because of the blinking of Job's eyes, he assumed that Job was being angry with God. He argued that if God did not consider His holy ones or creation clean, then certainly Job would be presumptuous to consider himself innocent. The point is that no man is in-

nocent of sin (Rm 3:23). However, if the proposition of the friends was correct, then they too should be suffering the same fate as Job, if indeed God directly renders physical suffering in time for sin.

15:17-35 ***A dreadful sound is in his ears:*** The wicked man lives in a constant state of anxiety. Though prosperous, the destroyer will steal all his goods. The wicked man lives a sensual life without respect for God. But in his prosperity, his rebellion against God will lead to his ruin. Darkness and destruction will overtake him. He will die before his time. The life of the wicked man is cut off before his time. The illustrations that Eliphaz used were directed toward Job, for he assumed that Job had sinned. He compared him with the wicked man whose end is before its time. Thus Job should repent before his end comes.

Chapter 16

16:1-5 As in his other addresses to his friends, Job responded first to his friends before making his complaints to God. Job had previously addressed God (13:20-28). That address was not answered. It was as if Job were waiting on God to reveal Himself to him in order to confirm his position before the three friends. The response that Job did receive was from his friends, not God. They thought that he was being arrogant to address God in the way that he did (15:5,6). In the preceding discourse, Eliphaz thought that Job was being presumptuous. In Job's speech in this chapter he feels hurt by Eliphaz, and thus administers a direct rebuttal. ***Miserable comforters:*** And so they were. Instead of bringing comfort to an afflicted man, they brought judgment and rebuke. They judged themselves by the hardness of their heart and by taking the opportunity to preach to Job about a supposed sin that was in his life. Instead of bringing comfort in a time of affliction, they added their harsh words to Job's misery.

16:6-17 Job once again anguished over his situation. He was exhausted with his condition. Except for the three friends who were in his presence, all his other friends had forsaken him. The three friends who were in his presence revealed that they truly were not his friends. At this time in his suffering, the results of his ailments had become visible in his body. He described his body as one on which wild beast had chewed. ***Gaped on me:*** Job's community considered him a scourge. They looked upon him with derision. He had become repulsive in the community. He felt that he had been forsaken by God and given over to the wicked. He lamented that he had been made a target to which God directed his archers to shoot arrows. ***Gall:*** Though we would use the figure of blood, those of Job's day used the figure of gall being poured out. ***Warrior:*** The metaphors that Job used reflects the extent to which his sufferings had progressed. It seems that no greater affliction could be cast on him without bringing death. Since Satan could not take his life, then we conclude that he was taking Job to the brink of death, and yet not letting his body die. ***Horn into the dust:*** Or, his pride (horn) was bowed to the ground. ***Foul with weeping:*** His face was red and distorted because of so much crying. Amidst all the agony of his predicament, Job still maintained his innocence. He was not compelled by his friends to acknowledge any injustice that he had done.

16:18-22 Do not cover my blood: If blood was spilled, vengeance was to be rendered to the one who spilled the blood (Gn 4:10,11; see Ez 24:7,8). Job was not being murdered, but he believed that if his ailments came to death, he was being unjustifiably killed. He wants his cry for justice to be made known. ***My witness:*** If he did die, he knew that he had a record in heaven of his righteousness. His record would show that he was innocent of all accusations. ***Tears to God:*** He knew that he could not turn to his friends for vindication. Therefore, he focused on God to be the final judge of his righteousness. His faith moved him to trust in God to vindicate him.

Chapter 17

17:1-5 It was at this time that Job felt he was at the point of death. ***Mockers:*** Though he was suffering even unto death, his three friends were mocking him because they had joined those who looked on him with derision. Their counsel was a judgment of his character, and thus they were a council of mockers as those who also did not understand Job. ***Pledge:*** Though at a low in his suffering, he asked God to guarantee his future. He thus maintained a hope past death. He trusted in God to provide something better than what he was enduring. ***Flattery ... for a spoil:*** The friends had boasted before the people of their consultations with Job. They had used Job as a spoil for their own social benefit.

17:6-9 ***Byword:*** The friends use the situation of Job as an occasion for their own exaltation in the community. By doing so, Job became a mockery in the community. Nevertheless, Job believed that truly upright people would understand that his predicament was not brought on because of any sin. He affirmed that those who were truly righteous would not be turned from their beliefs and behavior when they considered the calamity into which he had fallen. ***Stronger and stronger:*** Though he felt he was near death, Job became more confident that his life of righteousness was the right way. His confidence at this time in his suffering grew. Though he was suffering, he knew that his moral standards were the best for living for they were based on God's will.

17:10-16 ***Come now again:*** Because of his confidence in living after God's moral standards, Job gave an invitation to his friends to repent. He knew that they too would eventually join him in death. This was his appeal to them to repent before they were swallowed up by death. ***Pit ... worm:*** The grave (Sheol) was now to be his home. In death his relatives would be the worms of decay. At this time in his suffering, Job had given up hope of restoration to his former way of life, and thus he saw only death to be that which would bring him comfort.

Chapter 18

18:1-4 ***Bildad:*** What frustrated Bildad was that his traditional answers for Job were not accepted. His answers had been based on the traditional theology of the day that the wicked were directly afflicted by God, and thus Job's afflictions were evidence that he had sinned. Job did not accept this theology. Because he did not accept this theology of the

friends, they became more harsh toward him. Job likewise had responded with direct statements about their arrogant approach to his problems. Because Job did not repent from his supposed sin, Bildad felt that he was the true example of an unrepentant and rebellious sinner. ***Will the earth be shaken for you:*** Bildad accused Job of arrogantly thinking that the moral world should be changed in order to accommodate him. He was accusing Job of feeling that he should not be punished for his sin. Bildad felt that Job was past repentance, and thus this position on the part of Job had proved his guilt.

18:5-21 Bildad described the way of the wicked, which way he assumed Job was behaving. He first pronounced that darkness initially overtakes the wicked (vss 5,6). Snares are then laid for his feet (vss 7-11). Once snared in his own devices, the wicked are given over to the king of terror (vss 12-15). The living then forget the wicked (vss 16-19), and they become an illustration of wickedness (vss 20,21). ***Light of the wicked:*** The wicked will be extinguished from existence. ***His own counsel:*** The wicked will stumble over their own beliefs. ***Strength will be famished:*** When caught in their own snares and famished by their own wrongdoing, the wicked will come to an end. ***King of terrors:*** Death will eventually take control of the wicked man. Once death has taken control of the wicked man, others will take control of all the possessions that he has acquired in life. ***His roots:*** Wicked people will be forgotten because men desire to forget them. As people seek to remember only the good, the wicked will be forgotten because of the little good that they did in life. ***Branch will be cut off:*** There will be no descendants who will carry on with the family name of the wicked. Bildad obviously inferred the death of Job's family in this verse. This would have been a curse to Job's heritage, but in the end, God gave him more sons and daughters when he was restored.

Chapter 19

19:1-12 The speeches of the three friends had by this time digressed from teaching the theology of sin and suffering to an attack on the character of Job. Bildad's speech, therefore, called for a stern rebuke by Job. Though completely distressed by his afflictions, he was able in this discourse to rebuke those who troubled his soul with words of judgment. The friends had lost all shame in what they said to Job. As a consequence, Job was broken in pieces by their words. ***These ten times:*** There is probably some metaphorical meaning in the number ten, possibly meaning that the entirety of their discourses have been a harsh attack against Job. It seems that before Job was afflicted he was envied by his three friends because of his prosperity. Now that he was down, they took advantage of the situation in order to unleash their jealousy. Such is common of those who envy the accomplishments of others. ***My error remains with myself:*** The supposed sin that the friends assumed Job had committed was of no consequence in the sense that it was not worth mentioning. If the theology of the friends were correct, the extent of Job's sufferings would assume that he had committed a very great transgression. But since the friends could not identify the transgression, Job said that whatever he might have done to warrant such great punishment was between him and God. ***I cry out of wrong:*** Though Job did not understand the reason why God had afflicted him, he believed that God had unjustly brought punishment upon him. ***Net:*** Job felt that God had caught him in a trap and he could not escape. When he cried out for help, there was no answer. This only added to his frustration. ***Stripped me of my glory:*** His shining example of living righteously had been taken away. Since the scoffers believed that suffering was the direct result of sin, then Job's life no longer became an example of righteousness. Because of his great affliction, everyone assumed that he had sinned. ***Removed my hope:*** In 14:7 there was hope in that the tree was only cut down, leaving the roots to produce another tree. But here the tree is plucked up with its roots. There was no hope of another tree. ***Troops ... against me:*** Job complained that God's army had been set against him. He did not know how much longer he could hold out, though he was not fearful of death because it would bring him relief.

19:13-20 One of the greatest sufferings Job endured was to lose his friends. Not only were the three friends detached from him with their judgmental discourses, all others had also forsaken him. He was alone in his suffering, which loneliness brought great despair. No one was there for him. And yet, he remained faithful to God. Not one word of cursing came out of his mouth.

19:21-29 ***Have pity on me:*** The shallowness of the friendship of the kinsmen and friends was manifested in the fact that they gave up on Job in his time of need. It may be that all envied him in his former wealth, and thus manifested their true feelings of him when he had lost everything. True friends are discovered when one has nothing or is in a time of great need. It may have been that these supposed friends were hanging around only when Job could reward their friendship with material blessings. When the blessings were gone, so were they. ***Iron stylus on a rock:*** Job would have the testimony of his innocence recorded for generations in the future, which thing the Spirit did in this book as a testimony to the faithfulness of Job. ***My Redeemer lives:*** The redeemer was a close relative who would claim to raise up the posterity of a deceased brother. The levirate law was meant to guarantee the legacy of a brother who had no heirs that would carry on with his posterity (See Ex 6:6; 15:13). In this case, God was Job's redeemer. Job trusted that God would restore his legacy before humanity. Job trusted that he would be found innocent in the end, and thus be vindicated. ***In my flesh I will see God:*** We would assume that Job did believe in a bodily resurrection, which resurrection was revealed in Scripture many years later (See comments 1 Co 15). ***Be afraid of the sword:*** Because his friends had judged him so harshly, Job warned them that judgment would surely come upon them from God. If their theology of sin and suffering were true, then because of their sinful treatment of him, they should expect suffering to come. This admonition surely shocked them. Even if they were right that suffering is the direct result of sin, they realized their sinful assault on Job. Thus they knew that they were due the same suffering as Job for their sinful behavior and words they had spoken to Job.

Chapter 20

20:1-29 ***Zophar:*** This speech by Zophar was an emotional explosion because Job has exhorted the friends to beware of similar judgment that may come upon them because of their sinful attacks against him. Zophar continued to insist that Job should be aligned with the wicked. And because he was supposedly unrighteous as a result of some sin, he should suffer the same fate as the wicked. His speech, therefore, was a portrayal of the end of the wicked. ***I am greatly disturbed:*** Zophar felt the sting of Job's rebuttal. He did not like being called an ignorant beast (12:7) or one who spoke with vain words (16:3). He thus could keep silent no more. He unleashed a vehement onslaught of words by consigning Job to the fate of the wicked. ***Though his excellency mounts up to the heavens:*** Zophar reminded Job that even though the wicked exalt themselves, they are eventually brought low. They are terminated in the minds of the living as if they did not exist. The more they exalt themselves, the harder they fall. The wicked soon pass from the memory of the living. They pass away and their wealth is returned to the rightful owners. When they die, they take nothing with them. They partake of the delicacies of food, but it becomes as venom to their bodies. ***Oppressed ... the poor:*** The wealthy man will acquire great wealth, but he cannot enjoy it because he knows that he acquired it through the hard work of the poor, or even by taking advantage of the poor. ***Flee from the iron weapon:*** Zophar turns from the consequences of emotional punishment for unrighteous wealth to physical flight from the sword. The wicked man may oppress to the point that people take up arms against him. ***Darkness ... unfanned fire:*** At this time in his discourse, Zophar may have now taken the wicked man into his existence after death. The wicked person is cast into outer darkness and consumed in a fire that is not made by man (See comments Mt 25:41; Rv 20:11-15). ***Heritage appointed to him by God:*** We must assume that much of what Zophar said concerning the end of the wicked was believed by those of his day. And we must also assume that much was revealed to his generation and previous generations through the prophets of God (See Hb 1:1,2). This being the case, we must conclude that Zophar was preaching the punishment that was levied against the wicked by the living, as well as the punishment of God of the wicked after death. Zophar was wrong in applying his statements to Job. The irony of the drama of the book of Job is that Job represents the righteous before God and the friends of Job represent the character of the wicked. With every word of condemnation that came from the friends' mouths concerning the fate of the wicked, therefore, they were making judgments against themselves. At the end of the narrative, God instructed Job to pray for the friends lest they suffer the punishment that came from their own mouths.

Chapter 21

21:1-16 ***The wicked live:*** Job disagreed with the conclusions that Zophar reached concerning the wicked. Job stated that the wicked often live, prosper and become very powerful. Their children are established. Their houses are safe and God does not punish them. Their herds grow in number and their children dance with joy. They lavish their wealth upon themselves, and then die suddenly without anguish. And on top of all this, they reject any direction from God. Though all the friends of Job gave a picture of the wicked suffering the consequences of wealth in their lives, Job spoke of reality. The wicked enjoyed a great life. They were at ease in life, enjoying the comfort of their riches. Because they were rich and without God in their lives did not assume that they would have a hard life. In fact, Job reasoned that because they were wealthy they did not need to suffer the anxiety of life that was often experienced by the poor. The friends' argument that the wicked are punished in life with suffering, therefore, was not true. The wicked, who are enjoying life, contradicted the sin and suffering proposition of the three friends. ***What profit should we have if we pray:*** Too much prayer today is focused on what we request that God should give us or do for us. If the poor pray for profit, and yet remain poor, then we assume that God did not answer the prayer. When the rich prosper, but do not pray, then we must assume that God is not blessing them.

21:17-21 ***How often is the candle ... put out:*** Job asked this question concerning the wicked. The answer is not often. ***Iniquity for his children:*** Job assumed that the friends will reaffirm that God punishes the wicked by punishing their children (See Ex 20:5; Jr 31:29,30). But he says that this is not direct punishment of the wicked. The wicked one cares little for those who come after him, and thus punishment of the children of the wicked will have little consequence in reference to punishing the wicked.

21:22-26 Death would be the judgment as to whether one lived wickedly or righteously. Job's observation, however, is that there is no difference between the death of the righteous and the wicked. Some die of old age and some die in mid-life. The death of the rich and the poor are the same. Therefore, by observing the way in which one dies one cannot determine whether he is either wicked or righteous. The friends assumed that God was responsible for the death of both the rich and the poor, wicked and righteous. Job argued that since all die without discrimination concerning either wealth or moral behavior, then God is not responsible for one's death.

21:27-34 ***I know your thoughts:*** Job knew what the friends were thinking. They asserted that the wicked die without leaving any remembrance in the minds of the living (18:14-18; 20:26-28). However, there is evidence of the existence of the wicked in the minds of men. Society remembers wicked men who have sought to establish themselves at the sake of others. ***In your answers there remains falsehood:*** Reality answered the arguments of the friends. What they said was fundamentally not true. Since their arguments contained some truth did not mean that the conclusions of their arguments were true. Because their arguments were based on both truth and lies, their arguments were false. Job had thus answered all their arguments because he had directed his answers to their conclusions, which conclusions were erroneous.

Chapter 22

THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES

22:1-5 ***Eliphaz:*** Eliphaz introduced the third cycle of dis-

cussions between Job and the three friends. In the first cycle they discussed the nature of God in relation to the predicament of Job. In the second they discussed the providence of God in relation to the destiny of the wicked. The friends associated the nature of the wicked with Job. Job answered all the arguments of the friends in the previous discussions. Therefore, the friends in this cycle of speeches focus on what they think are the sins of Job. ***Can a man be profitable to God:*** Eliphaz assumed that man could not presume to be righteous before God, and thus man's righteousness was only good for man himself. Since man's deeds are of no consequence to God, Eliphaz reasoned that God's judgment was for the good of the individual. He continued his reasoning that Job was suffering because of his sin.

22:6-11 In these verses Eliphaz launched into accusations concerning things that he felt Job had not done. But considering the fact that Job was considered righteous before God because he did these good works, we would conclude that Eliphaz was grasping for anything by which he might accuse Job of some sin. It may be that he felt that Job did not perform according to his standards in accomplishing the good works that he did. The fallacy of his argument, however, was in the fact that all righteous men perform in these areas of good works.

22:12-20 ***Height of heaven:*** God is transcendent. Though He dwells in a heavenly environment, He involves Himself in the affairs of man. ***He does not see:*** Job did not state that God is distant from the righteous. He stated that God deals justly with both the righteous and wicked. God does know the situation of the righteous, as well as the wicked, though He chooses not to be a respecter of persons. Both the righteous and wicked receive the natural blessings of living in the physical environment of the world. ***Washed away with a flood:*** Reference here is undoubtedly to the flood of Noah's day that had been orally handed down from one generation to another. God brought judgment down on the wicked generation of Noah, even though they enjoyed the goodness of His creation. ***Laugh them to scorn:*** When the righteous see God's vindication on the wicked, the righteous rejoice.

22:21-30 ***Return to the Almighty:*** Though Eliphaz did not condemn Job in his speech, he called on him to return to what he believed was the will of God. What is significant concerning the twisted view of the friends is that they did not know the true way of God to which they exhorted Job to return. They had created religious beliefs after their own desires, or at least after the society in which they lived. Since they did not know where Job had violated any law of their religious beliefs, they did know the religious beliefs to which they called on Job to turn. Job's stand for his right behavior according to the will of God was not arrogance. His stand was based on knowing truth, and thus refusing the social intimidation that was presented by the friends. The friends' theology had been formed by the culture in which they lived. Job's had been patterned after the will of God. The lesson was that those who come calling for repentance must know the law of God. They must be able to separate their traditions from the law of God. There is no reason why anyone should be intimidated to repent to a system of religious traditions.

Chapter 23

23:1-17 Job did not reply directly to Eliphaz. At this stage of development in the cycles of discussion, Job began to reflect on his physical condition and tried to discover the meaning for his misery. ***Even today:*** Some have suggested that the discussion with the friends took place over a period of several weeks. ***Oh that I knew where I might find Him:*** It is at this time that Job seems to discount the presence of his friends and carry on with a personal discussion with himself. Because God had not responded to his pleas, he complained that God was distant from his calamity. If he were able to speak directly to God concerning his situation, he wondered what God would do. He wondered if God would overwhelm him with His power. ***He hides Himself:*** Job's suffering is a testimony of how God works with His saints. They suffer in an environment where it seems that they are alone. But He is working behind the scenes for their case (Rm 8:28). Suffering, therefore, draws faith out of God's people. And faith must grow to the point of being able to count it with all joy when one is suffering (Js 1:2-4). ***He knows:*** Job concluded that whether or not he could find God, God knew where he was. And thus faith is the assurance of those who believe (Hb 11:1). Knowing that God knows our calamity reassures us that He is working all things for our case. ***Who can turn Him:*** Because God was not responding to his pleas, Job concluded that God was not concerned about the situation of the righteous, particularly his. Nevertheless, he was confident that when God had tried him, he would come forth as refined gold (1 Pt 1:6-9). ***Presence of the darkness:*** God did not hide His dark mystery from Job. So Job was bewildered concerning its presence in his life. He could not understand the extent of his sufferings that God had unleashed upon him. And so it is with those who trust in God. They do not always understand why they suffer, but they must understand that God is there through their suffering (See comments Js 1:1,2,12).

Chapter 24

24:1-12 ***See His days:*** These are days in a legal court to determine when God should render judgment. In Job's opinion, God should make it known when He sits in judgment in court in order to hand down judgments. ***God does not pay attention to folly:*** This statement in verse 12 is Job's conclusion to the work of evil doers in verses 2-11. To Job, God does not give attention to these works of the wicked. It seems to Job that God is sitting idly by while the wicked carry on with their evil deeds.

24:13-21 Job recognized that evil existed throughout the world. He felt that God had allowed the world to be overcome with evil men who oppressed the righteous. Job's friends had said that the wicked come to an early death because of the judgment of God. However, the existence of evil men, who seem to have taken over the world, proves that this argument was completely wrong. There are more wicked people in the world than righteous believers.

24:22-25 Job affirmed that some people seem to be singled out by God. He prolongs the life of those individuals for a period, but eventually they too are consumed by death. How-

ever, Job viewed these people only as exceptions to the rule. God allows life to go on and men to endure the natural calamity of suffering and death in a world that has gone wrong because of sin. At this time in the discussions, Job had answered the argument of the friends who affirmed that God singles out the wicked in order to bring them to suffering and death. The fact was that the wicked continue in life. They prosper and often live a good life. Their prosperity in life did not prove that they were righteous. In the same argument, Job's suffering did not prove that he was unrighteous.

Chapter 25

25:1-6 ***Bildad:*** Bildad ignored in his brief reply the previous argument of Job. In this speech he introduced no new arguments, indicating that at this time in their exchange of speeches, Bildad realized the futility of the friends' arguments against Job. Thus in this speech he focused on magnifying God, while staying away from the reasoning of Job lest he again suffer a rebuke by Job. In this speech Bildad gave praise to the power of God who makes peace in His high places by bringing all things under control (See Hb 1:3). ***His armies:*** Reference here is to celestial bodies that are personified. These were the heavenly bodies over which God has control (Dt 4:19; 17:3; Hb 1:3). If the celestial bodies are not pure, then certainly man is not pure. In comparison to the celestial bodies, man is as a worm. He is next to nothing. Since man is insignificant, then Bildad was assuming that Job would understand that man cannot exalt himself in reference to his own righteousness.

Chapter 26

26:1-11 Everything that Bildad had just said in chapter 25 had been said before. It was as if Bildad had been speaking to someone else, for what Job needed was power, strength and wisdom. Job already knew everything that Bildad said. He knew the majesty and power of God. What Job wanted to know was how God used His power in reference to His saints. ***Whose spirit came from you:*** Job asked who it was who inspired Bildad. ***Under the waters:*** It was thought by some that Sheol, the place of the dead, was in the depths of the sea (See Is 14:9). Job's point is that the dead are not beyond the power of God. In death, therefore, one does not escape God. God's majesty and authority are extended throughout the universe. It is thus extended to where the dead reside. ***North over the empty space:*** As far as the naked human eye can see in the northern night, one sees an empty space. The earth is not held in place by another material object. What Job described in these words was the cosmology of his day. His description of the world and universe far exceeded that which had previously been given by any of the friends. His point was to emphasize the fact that God was in control of all things, though at this time in his sufferings he was still wondering why God did not intervene in order to bring him relief.

26:12-14 The background of what Job described here may be based on Babylonian myths concerning creation. God is able, with His power, to subdue the sea, though it may rage. He can clear away storm clouds and dismiss any supposed monsters of the sea. Because of His greatness, man is unable to comprehend fully the nature of God. God is incomprehensible. In comparison to His power, we can hear only a whisper from Him.

Chapter 27

27:1-6 In verses 1-6 Job continued his response to Bildad by reaffirming his innocence. ***As God lives:*** This is in the form of an oath. Job called on God as a witness to his innocence. He affirmed that though God afflicted his soul, he would continue to maintain his integrity. He stated that he would maintain his position because he was confident that he had not committed any sin that warranted the suffering that he was enduring. The result of his belief in his innocence was his self-confidence.

27:7-23 Because of the nature of these verses, they seem to be the words of one of the friends. According to the Mesoretic Hebrew text, Zophar is not given a third discourse. Bildad's discourse in 25:1-6 was short, and thus we could conclude that he had no further arguments to sustain the position of the friends. In this text, Zophar seems to give a final brief rebuttal, but introduces no new arguments. If verses 7-23 are the words of Zophar, they are his last words of rebuttal. He introduces no new arguments, but simply expresses in a dogmatic manner former beliefs of the friends. ***Be as the wicked:*** The nature of this statement indicates the nature of the speeches of the friends. This particular statement is a desire that is expressed in the form of a curse that the enemies have the same condemnation as the wicked. ***Will God hear his cry:*** Would the hypocrite even call on God? If he did, then the answer would be that God would not hear. ***Portion of a wicked man with God:*** The calamities that are discussed in verses 13-23 are the judgments of God upon the wicked. The wicked man will have children, but they will be killed. Those who associate with the wicked person will die, but have no one to mourn their death. Once dead, the possessions of the wicked will be consumed by others. The house of the wicked will dilapidate away as a spider's web. The wicked will be consumed with death with no one to deliver them. ***Clap their hands:*** When the wicked die, the living are happy. They are happy to be relieved from the anguish that the wicked brought on them while they were alive.

Chapter 28

If 27:7-23 was the last speech of Zophar, then the speech of this chapter is Job's final reply to Zophar. In these words, Job reaffirmed his position. This speech was not an argument against Zophar, for Zophar presented no new arguments. Bible students have found it difficult to place chapter 28 in the context of the discussions. The content seems to be an answer of Job to the claim of the friends that wisdom had been granted to them because of their assessment of Job's predicament. In the contents of chapters 29-31, Job ignores his friends, having answered their arguments. At this time he possibly moves on with a monologue to explain before God his calamity. In chapter 29 Job reflects on his former life when God blessed him with friends in his good life. In chapter 30 Job described

the calamity that has come into his life as a result of God's working against him. In chapter 31 he defended his innocence, and thus was not deserving of the calamities that often befell the wicked.

28:1-11 These verses describe the mining processes of man. By their resolve, men refine ore for gold and silver. They go into the darkness of mines in order to extract ore for refinement in order to acquire gold and silver. In the process they dig deep shafts, and with hanging ropes, go into the darkness of their shafts in search of the riches of the earth. Man is also able to conquer great mountains and cut out canals for water. The point of the writer is to manifest the ingenuity of man in order to conquer the physical world. But in his efforts to succeed in conquering the material world, he fails to find wisdom. In fact, the more man would succeed in this world, the less wisdom he acquires. In this context wisdom is in reference to recognizing God, His will, and that which is beyond this world. Thus the more one is involved in the world in search of its treasures, the less he focuses on that which is not of this world.

28:12-14 ***It is not found in the land of the living:*** This is the pronouncement on all those who would involve themselves so much in the world that they forget the One who created all things. In search of things to satisfy their cravings, men forget their Creator. Wisdom from God is not found in the material world.

28:15-28 Wisdom is not something that is for sale. It cannot be purchased with gold, or measured on a scale to determine its value. One cannot buy it with precious stones. ***God understands its way:*** Only through God can one acquire true wisdom, for there is no true wisdom without the acknowledgment of the existence of God. ***He prepared it:*** Since God is the source of true wisdom, then man cannot find it without first finding God. ***The fear of the Lord:*** This is the source of true wisdom. When one brings his life into conformity with the will of the Lord, he has established the foundation upon which one discovers the wisdom of God. Thus only those who love the word of God and study it, will be able to acquire the wisdom that comes from above. James exhorted, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God . . ."* (Js 1:5; see comments Js 1:5; 3:17).

Chapter 29

29:1-20 In this chapter Job reflects on his former life when he enjoyed prosperity. In his reflection on those days, he yearned for them. He saw them as days when God preserved him. They were days when he clearly saw the presence of God as one would see the light of a candle in darkness. Light is here used to refer to the presence of God, whereas darkness is used to refer to being separated from God (Compare Mt 18:12; 25:30; Jd 13). ***Days of my youth:*** Job reflected on his youth when he lived in a carefree world close to God. It was a world where the struggles of life were worked out by the older generation. ***Children:*** The presence of children brought joy. Children were the guarantee of the continuation of one's heritage past his death. ***Butter:*** The presence of milk and cream were indications of wealth and prosperity. ***Rock:*** This was probably the location of olive groves from which olive oil was derived. ***In the street:*** In his former years, Job was shown great respect. The aged men respected him, as well as princes and nobles. Even the younger showed great respect by hiding themselves when he approached. ***Delivered the poor:*** Contrary to the former accusation of his friends, Job did care for the poor. He did care for orphans and widows. He corrected the wicked who would take advantage of the people. He delivered the oppressed out of the mouth of the oppressor. He was a true example of righteousness before his community. He lived a life that was to be envied. It was a life of a righteous man with all the blessings that came from being a good person. But when all this was taken from him, he became the scourge of the community. He became such because of the false theology of the community at the time, that a man's calamity is the direct result of sin in his life. The dilemma of the community at the time, which was expressed by the three friends, was that they could not discover any fault in Job. This fact surely caused some frustration on the part of the community, but specifically for the three friends. We might conclude that the book of Job was written in order to dispel this false concept of how God relates to the righteous. It brings no pleasure to God to see His children suffering.

29:21-25 Job's reflection on his honor that he once received from people brought sadness. He was one to whom people gave great attention for they respected what he had to say. His smile encouraged them. They believed what he had to say. They accepted him as a leader in the community. They followed his direction. From all this Job felt disgraced, for it had all been taken from him. And yet, he did not utter one word of disbelief in God. He offered his complaints to God, but he never questioned the existence of God.

Chapter 30

30:1-15 ***But now:*** In this chapter Job lamented the fact that everything that he mentioned in the preceding chapter was gone. He once held a position that was envied by all, but now he was in a situation that was despised by all. ***With the dogs:*** Now the sons of the fathers whom Job formerly considered unfit to be shepherds of his sheep now mocked him. The group of people who mocked him were those who had no position in society. Job had suffered such a great calamity that those who were considered the lowest of society now mocked him. ***I am their song ... byword:*** Job was at one time given a position of high honor in society. But now he was considered lower than the outcast of society. He was continually abused verbally by those whom society had cast out. What seems to be the case in reference to the poor he helped in chapter 29, is that the same poor and outcast whom he had formerly helped had now turned against him with mockery. ***Spit in my face:*** Their abhorrence of him had progressed to the point of spitting in his face. It seems that the jealousy that many had of him in his former life of prosperity was now being unleashed on him. The fact that they showed no pity on the fall of such a great person indicates that they were people of little character. We would conclude that Job knew this when he helped them, and thus the righteous character of Job was in the fact

that he helped people whom he knew were not appreciative of his help. The manifestation of true righteousness is that the righteous give, not expecting anything in return. Their giving manifests their unprejudiced compassion for humanity. ***Terrors are turned on me:*** His oppressors not only ignored him, they afflicted him. They came upon him as waters from a burst dam. They were relentless in their mockery and assaults. If people would have ignored him, he would have better endured his calamity. But they seem to launch attacks against him in his presence. As interpreters of his situation, therefore, we view the confrontation with the three friends as the voice of the community against him. He answered all the theological arguments of the community. And because he had, they turned to mockery, the natural reaction of those who cannot answer the arguments of their opposition.

30:16-31 ***My bones are pierced:*** Job now explained the agony of his ailments. It seems that his physical appearance was altered by the ailments that he endured. This agony was so severe that he felt that God forsook him even though he prayed for relief. God had not forsaken him, but such is the natural reaction of those who are enduring great suffering. ***You have become cruel to me:*** Because he knew that God could relieve him of his suffering, but did not, he concluded that God was being cruel. The atheist uses a similar argument to deny the existence of God. The Christian affirms that God is all good and all powerful. But the atheist argues that if God is all good, but does not relieve His people of suffering because He cannot, then He is not all powerful. If He is all powerful and can relieve suffering, but does not, then He is not all good. Therefore, the atheist concludes that the Christian's all-good and all-powerful God does not exist. The answer to this argument lies in the fact that God is a God of love. He created man from whom He seeks love. In order for the love of man to be sincere, he must live in an environment that allows a free-moral individual the opportunity to choose to love God with sincerity. In order for this to happen, the free-moral individual must have the ability to love and be in an environment that allows the individual to make choices to love. The freedom to make these choices has allowed man the opportunity to make many evil choices, which choices have brought on mankind great suffering. The point is that God could not create an environment that did not present the opportunities for choices to be made, and at the same time hold man accountable for sinful decisions and actions. If man was in an environment that allowed choices of good and evil, but was not a true free moral individual who could make such choices, then God would be unjust to condemn anyone who made bad choices. Therefore, for God to stand just in judgment, a truly free moral person must be in an environment that allows both good and bad choices to be made.

Chapter 31

31:1-23 In this chapter Job reaffirmed his innocence. In listing various sins in which he could have been involved, he upholds his integrity while pronouncing certain consequences on himself if his claims were not true. ***I made a covenant with my eyes:*** This is a covenant that all should make, that they not look on a woman to lust after her (See comments Mt 5:29-32). ***What portion:*** If Job sinned, then he asked what punishment should he expect from God because of his sin. If one sins, he should expect only punishment and destruction in reaping that which he has sown. ***See my ways:*** God knows our behavior. If measured by objective judges, Job was confident of his innocence. If he was found guilty, then he was willing to give up everything, including his wife. She could be given to another husband to grind his grain. ***Heinous crime:*** Job had not created behavior after his own lusts. Adultery was considered by him to be a heinous crime against another person, and thus deserving of severe punishment. ***Fire that consumes:*** This is from the word *abaddon*, indicating the annihilation of the wicked. ***Manservant:*** He treated his servants with dignity because they too were created by God and were deserving of respect. ***When God rises up:*** If he had shown disrespect to his servants, then when God called him to give account of his behavior, he would have no recourse to escape the punishment that was due him. ***Poor ... widows ... fatherless:*** Job defended the fact that he had carried out his social responsibilities. As a prosperous person of society, he assumed his responsibility of caring for the poor, widows and orphans (Js 1:27). He did not ignore the needs of others. He was not a hardened man, but a man of compassion. ***Destruction from God:*** Job knew that God was a God of love and mercy. However, he also recognized that God was a God of just judgment. He knew that God would eventually bring retribution on the wicked and that every man must give account of his deeds (See 2 Co 5:10).

31:24-28 ***God my hope:*** Job denied that he was a materialist. He did not covet material things of this world. If he had made gold his god, then he would have abused the rights of others in order to acquire it. Therefore, he did not lie in order to accumulate wealth for himself. ***Sun ... moon:*** He denied that God was the creation of his own mind as were idol gods. He denied that he worshiped the sun or moon. He was not an idolater. ***Denied the God who is above:*** If he had worshiped other gods, then he would have denied the one true and living God. In the society in which he lived, there were idolaters. He was not one of those who had created God after his own imagination. An idolater seeks to live according to his own standards, and then creates a god after his own imagination who would justify his carnal living. Job's wealth did not come to him because he was subservient to some idol god, for it was not wealth that was the goal of his life (Compare Jr 44:17-19; Ez 8:16).

31:29-34 ***Destruction of him who hated me:*** Job did not mistreat his enemies. He did not curse his enemies by calling evil to come on them (See Nm 22:5,6; Pv 24:17,18; 25:21,22). ***Job's meat:*** Everyone of Job's house had ample supply of food. No one went hungry. No traveler had to stay in the street, for Job was hospitable to all. ***Adam:*** Adam hid himself, but he could not hide his sin from God. ***Fear a great multitude:*** Job was not intimidated into doing that which was evil. Being accepted by society was not greater than his fear of God. He did not allow the culture of society to determine his beliefs or behavior in reference to God.

31:35-40 Job cried out for people to listen to his plea of innocence. But no one would hear. God was silent, and his

friends accused him. If his behavior were written down, then he would be found to be innocent. If his behavior were recorded, he could approach God with the confidence of a prince. ***If my land cries against me:*** Job even calls on the owners of land to be a witness to him. If he had taken their produce without paying for it, then he assumed responsibility for such actions. Job even treated his own land fairly. If he had not, then he asked that wild weeds take over his land and consume his crops. ***Words ... ended:*** The preceding were the final protests of Job. He had finished his arguments, both to his friends and to God.

Speeches Of Elihu
(32:1 – 37:24)

Outline: (1) Introduction of Elihu (32:1-5), (2) First speech of Elihu (32:6 – 33:33), (3) Second speech of Elihu (34:1-37), (4) Third speech of Elihu (35:1-16), (5) Fourth speech of Elihu (36:1 – 37:24)

Chapter 32

INTRODUCTION OF ELIHU

Many Bible students consider chapters 32–37 to be the work of another writer. This is believed because Elihu has not been mentioned in the book until now, and thus he was not originally a part of the group of friends that initially came to Job. Also, there is a difference in the style of poetry and language in these chapters. And finally, some portions of these chapters seem to be a response that Elihu made in reference to reading the original statements of Job. The sense is that he was not present with the three friends, but later read the material and made added arguments. However, regardless of the reason why some believe that the speech of Elihu was added later, we can conclude that because he was young, he was not considered with the original three friends. He simply came with them to Job and remained silent. At this time in the series of discourses, and because of his youth, he was motivated to speak out in his frustration.

32:1-5 ***Righteous in his own eyes:*** This statement should be understood from the point of view of the three friends. They ceased to speak because they could not convince Job that he had somewhere sinned. In their frustration, they ceased to continue with their arguments. ***Son of Barachel:*** Elihu was a relative to Job (See 1:1; Gn 22:21). ***Wrath was kindled:*** Elihu responded because he was angry with what he considered Job's self righteousness and the failure of the other friends to answer his arguments.

FIRST SPEECH OF ELIHU

32:6-14 ***The Almighty gives them understanding:*** He had not spoken because of his youth, but then he reasons that since God gives wisdom, he has the right to speak because God had given him special understanding. ***I waited for your words:*** Such is typical of youth who listen to the statements of the aged, and then make their replies that are based on what they have heard from them. Elihu did not think that Job was all that clever in his response to the friends' arguments. He felt that Job could be answered, and thus he stepped forward to answer him with supposedly new arguments.

32:15-22 It seems that Elihu was exploding in words because he had held his peace for so long. Therefore, he forewarned them that he would not hold back, but would speak forth his mind. He thus offered himself as a fourth party in the discourse. There was originally Job, the three friends and God. Now Elihu comes into the discussions as a self-appointed arbitrator.

Chapter 33

33:1-7 ***Uprightness of my heart:*** Elihu was not being a bigot by accusing Job of being arrogant for claiming that he was self-righteous, while he considered himself righteous. According to the culture of the day, he was affirming that he was not speaking without reevaluating his own life. He speaks with the confidence that the Spirit of God created him. Since both he and Job were the products of God, then he had a right to speak just as Job. ***Your spokesman before God:*** It is in this belief that Elihu is arrogant. Job had desired a conference with God, and here Elihu was presumptuous in saying that he was Job's advocate with God. He would speak for God. ***My fear:*** Elihu says that Job does not need to fear him as he would fear God. From what Elihu says in his statements concerning himself, we would conclude that he was arrogant in his youth.

33:8-22 ***I am clean:*** After hearing all that Job had said, Elihu focused on one specific argument of Job that he offered to the three friends which they could not answer. This was the affirmation of Job that he was innocent before God. But Elihu felt that Job's argument was flawed. Since God is greater than man, then it is wrong to strive against Him by assuming that His actions are wrong. From this premise Elihu argued that God can do what He wants to do in the life of any man. What He does may seem wrong to man, but it is right because it is the action of God. ***God speaks once or twice:*** One thing that caused frustration on the part of Job was that God would not answer his complaints. Elihu asserted that if man were wise, then he would be perceptive to God's speaking. God, therefore, does not need to speak several times in order to communicate His will to man. So when God does speak, He opens the ears of those to whom He speaks. It is the responsibility of man, therefore, to be attentive to God's communication. He speaks in a way to save man from the pit (grave) and to preserve him from death.

33:23-33 ***A messenger:*** God also speaks through those who interpret the will of God for man. ***He is gracious:*** If the sinner hears and obeys the word of God, then God will forgive and save him. Elihu was assuming, and rightfully so, that no one is predestined to condemnation. Since every sinner has the opportunity to hear and obey, then God does not predetermine that any should perish (2 Pt 3:9). ***I have sinned:*** Verses 27 & 28 is the testimony of the one who has repented as a result of God's graciousness. ***I will teach you:*** Job had gone from being a person to whom all in the community came to hear his words, to one to whom a young arrogant person asked him to be silent while he unloaded his frustration on him. The wisdom of Job was manifested in that he kept his silence while this young man exploded with words. Whether

someone is right or wrong, it is sometimes best to keep one's silence while others rail.

Chapter 34
SECOND SPEECH OF ELIHU

34:1-9 ***You wise men:*** This was probably a call by Elihu to all those in the community, not just the three friends who were present with Job. Elihu could not accept the fact that Job had claimed innocence. He felt that Job was a person who drank criticism like water, and thus criticism had little effect on Him. He accused Job of walking with wicked men, and thus failing to see the error of his own way.

34:10-20 Elihu asserted that God awarded every person in life with what he deserved. The wicked were thus awarded His judgments because of their sin. Calamity that came into the life of the wicked, therefore, was just. God cannot be accused of wrong judgments, and thus those who assume to be righteous, and at the same time suffer calamity, are actually unrighteous. Since it is not possible for God to award wrong to the righteous, then the conclusion must be that everyone who claims to be righteous, but is suffering, is actually sinful. It is for this reason that Elihu argued that those in calamity cannot complain against God. ***Will even he who hates right govern:*** Since being just is a condition for governing, then it is unthinkable that the unjust should rule. It is for this reason that Elihu felt that Job was presumptuous to think that God was unjust to inflict calamity upon him. God shows no partiality because He created both the rich and poor, and thus He has the right to administer judgment as He so chooses. According to Elihu, God does not discriminate in His treatment of all men.

34:21-30 ***He sees:*** No one can hide from God. He is omnipresent, and thus all men are continually in His presence. He is omniscient in that He knows all the dealings of man. Since God will not lay on man more than what he deserves, it is not right for one to complain, as Job, that God has worked unjustly in his case. God's workings with men and nations is the same. It is thus impossible for God to work hypocritically with any individual. Elihu's conclusion to Job, therefore, was that if God does what is just toward all, then no man can contend with God concerning His judgments.

34:31-37 Elihu asserted that Job should repent of his complaining against God because of his personal calamity. And since he was suffering, Job should repent of his sin. Instead of complaining, Elihu exhorted, Job should be asking God to teach him. Because Job had spoken in complaint, he was speaking without knowledge. If his behavior of complaint is not answered, then others will be led astray by the actions of Job. It is for this reason that Elihu considered Job's position to be rebellion against God.

Chapter 35
THIRD SPEECH OF ELIHU

35:1-8 Elihu thought it was necessary to address the claim of Job that his righteousness was more than God's. He felt that this particular claim on the part of Job must have an answer for the sake of the three friends. Elihu agreed with Job concerning the majesty of God who is far above all that man is. Job had stated that God is so great that His actions are not affected by anything that men do on earth. When men sin on earth, it does not affect God in heaven. If man is righteous on earth, it does not profit God.

35:9-16 ***Songs in the night:*** One of the enduring characteristics that God implanted in the mind of man was the ability to sing in the midst of trouble. Regardless of the amount of calamity that befalls man, there is hope. Job had affirmed that his suffering was not heard by God. Elihu responded that there are many calamities that afflict men. But much of the crying out was heard by wicked oppressors. Elihu affirmed that much of the crying out by man is from pain, not suffering. Since God created man superior to beasts who do not cry out when in pain, then certainly man should not cry out in pain. Elihu concluded that it was the pride of evil men that moved them to cry out. Or, he also asserted that it was simply man in his vanity that moved him to cry out. ***Open his mouth in vain:*** Elihu contended that Job had been wrong in thinking that God had not heard his cries to God. God is not indifferent to the pleas of man. He corrected Job in thinking that God did not respond to the pleas of man.

Chapter 36

36:1-4 ***Speak on God's behalf:*** It seems that Elihu was claiming inspiration from God. He asserted that his knowledge came from afar, and that he was speaking on behalf of God. This was a bold assertion, and one that manifested the arrogance of Elihu.

36:5-12 God is mighty in strength and wisdom according to Elihu. He thus deals justly in giving to man just punishments in life. He shows no favor to the wicked and remembers the poor. Elihu contends that God especially cares for the righteous. He exalts the righteous. If the righteous are disciplined, they are disciplined in order to return them to the way of righteousness. Suffering, therefore, is used by God to encourage repentance. If the disciplined righteous repent, then they are restored to their former prosperity. If they continue in their rebellion while disciplined, according to Elihu, they will suffer the consequences of the wicked. Elihu was accusing Job of becoming angry at God's discipline, and thus, being a rebellious against God by not repenting.

36:13-23 ***Opens their ears in oppression:*** This is Elihu's premise. God gets the attention of the rebellious by means of calamity. Therefore, one should not rebel against suffering that has been brought on the righteous by God. Job, he accuses, has not accepted the direct affliction by God in order to discipline him and cause repentance from his sin. As a result, he cannot receive the blessings of God, but is condemned to suffer the fate of the wicked. ***Do not desire the night:*** Job had requested death as relief from his calamity. God sometimes cuts off the wicked. But in the case of Job, according to Elihu, Job's request for death instead of repentance was an indication of his rebellion. Job should seek repentance, not death. Instead of receiving instruction from God through discipline, Elihu affirmed that Job had a rebellious spirit by seeking to teach God rather than learning submission from his suffering.

36:24-33 As has already been said by the friends and Job,

Elihu exalted the majesty of God. He exalted God in this manner as a rebuke against Job, for he had accused Job of not submitting to the omnipotence of God to inflict whom He desires in order to encourage repentance. Job's supposed rebellion, therefore, was an attack against the majesty of God. ***The cattle also:*** The behavior of cattle in the field changes when a storm approaches, and thus their behavior is a warning concerning an approaching storm.

Chapter 37

37:1-13 Elihu continued his praise of the power of God in these first verses of chapter 37. His point was that Job should not question the One who is able to control the physical universe. Elihu concluded that if God is so powerful, then certainly it is not the place of Job to question Him. Since the suffering of Job had come directly from God because of some sin that Job had committed, then Job must submit to the chastisement of God. The thunder announces the presence of God. Cattle feel warned by the sound of the storm. In dealing with ice and snow, Elihu emphasizes the helplessness of man. When God breathes, ice is formed and lakes are frozen over. The clouds obey the will of God and scatter throughout the heavens at His command. Man should do the same in response to the will of God.

37:14-24 ***Consider the wondrous works of Him:*** When considering the wondrous works of God, Elihu felt that Job should respond with repentance. ***Do you know:*** Since God works directly in the life of man, Elihu questioned why Job should think that he can question God concerning His work. His suffering, therefore, should be accepted as the will of God. Job, therefore, should not rebel, but repent. ***Around God is awesome majesty:*** Since God is so majestic, He cannot be comprehended. It is impossible, therefore, for man to find out how He works. And since men cannot fully comprehend the work of God, then they must not question His work among men, but submit to all that happens in the life of every individual. Elihu's argument appeared to be correct, but it must be considered in the context of the erroneous theology of his day. Unjust suffering for sin as a direct work of God against man was questioned by Job. Elihu felt that Job was thus questioning the omniscience of God. Job was questioning why God would inflict him with such a great calamity for something of which he was not aware. Though the principle of men reaping what they sow is true, Job questioned why one should be directly inflicted by God for sin. Elihu thought that Job should not question God in this manner, but accept his suffering as punishment for sin. In the series of discourses, therefore, Elihu did not present any new arguments. He presented his arguments passionately, but did not add any new material to the thoughts that the friends had presented to Job. As the three friends, he exalted the majesty of God, and thus concluded that man had no right to complain against God's desire to correct man by direct punishment. Since God is who He says He is, then He has the right to command that His creation listen to His word. Elihu's speeches, therefore, offer only an interlude in the discourses to bring the reader to the answer of God out of the whirlwind.

God Converses With Job
(38:1 – 42:6)

Outline: (1) God's first answer for Job (38:1 – 40:5), (2) God's second answer for Job (40:6 – 42:6)

Chapter 38
GOD'S FIRST ANSWER FOR JOB

Throughout the discourses of the book, Job asked for a response from God concerning his specific case. Throughout the time of suffering, Job was not without fault. He had questioned the work of God in his life to the point of inferring that God was unjust in afflicting him. The extent of his sufferings, Job complained, was not justified for any sin of which he was ignorant. And in view of the special occasion by which Job was tried by Satan as a result of an agreement between God and Satan, we can understand why Job would complain to God. It is for this reason that Job sought an audience with God. This request was answered in the following chapters, but not in the way that Job requested. God does not enter into a debate with Job, but answers him by revealing His majesty. It was an answer that manifested the relationship between God and man.

38:1-3 Yahweh (the Lord) answered Job out of a great tempest (See Ps 18:8-16; Ez 1:4,28). This was Israel's word to refer to God. Its use here would confirm that the book was written during the history of Israel, though Job and his calamity happened before the forming of national Israel at Mt. Sinai. ***Darkens counsel:*** Job's complaints had obscured his understanding of the work of God among men, specifically in reference to his assumption that God was unjust. ***Gird up now your loins:*** God was going to take Job on a revelation adventure that he did not expect. ***Demand of you:*** Job did not expect this type of response from God, for he was looking for a debate (Compare 40:3-5). Job wanted specific answers for his questions of complaint. But God did not answer his questions, lest Job and ourselves imply that God enters into debate with man. Men entered into debate with the idolatrous gods that they created after their own imaginations. But with the one true and living God, there is no debate. By faith we must accept what He does, assuming that He knows what He is doing.

38:4-11 ***Where were you:*** God's response was overwhelming. It was a comparison between the infinite power of God with the finite ineptness of man. The response of God was given in such a challenging manner that there could be no comparisons made between God and man. ***Declare:*** God began with the creation of all things. If Job considered man able to debate with God, then God calls on him to tell Him how He created the worlds. Even if Job were present during the creation process, he could not comprehend how creation took place. ***Line on it:*** Creation was compared to a builder stretching a plumb line over a building in order to establish the perfection of what was built. ***Morning stars sang ... sons of God:*** The personification of stars expresses that even that which was created, including the angels, rejoiced over the creation. ***Shut up the sea:*** The earth was originally created with no separation between the waters and soil. The Spirit

of God hovered over the waters (Gn 1:1,2). After the initial creation of all things, God then separated the waters from the dry land. ***The cloud its garment:*** The earth was first covered with a canopy of cloud in order to create a greenhouse effect of warmth throughout the surface of the world. During the flood of Noah's day this canopy of water was condensed and brought to the earth (See comments Gn 1).

38:12-18 ***The dawn to know its place:*** The order that is evident with the sun, moon, stars and earth is exact, and thus manifests the uniformity of nature that God created among heavenly bodies. ***Springs of the sea:*** In Job's day people had no idea of the existence of ocean springs and currents. To this day, men have not been able to venture to the deepest part of the sea. ***Gates of death:*** Though through revelation we are given a glimpse of life after death, no living man knows the nature of the existence of those who have died. ***Breadth of the earth:*** Job had no idea that the earth was round. If the earth were flat, he had never been to the limits or edge of the earth.

38:19-38 ***Light dwells:*** Job had no idea of the source of light from space, nor the limits of the darkness of space. His knowledge of these things was limited to his own personal experience, which experience was inadequate when considering the universe. ***Treasures of the snow:*** Job had no idea of the nitrogen that snow brings to plant life. ***Reserved for ... battle:*** God uses His natural forces of snow and hail to fight against men (See Ja 10:11). Man cannot control these forces, but God can use them according to his will. Concerning the processes by which nature functions orderly, God asked Job to answer concerning the existence of natural laws. God created the world, and then created natural laws to govern that which was created. He is not only the creator of the material world, but also the creator of the world of natural laws. ***Pleiades:*** This is a constellation of seven stars. ***Orion:*** Man was not the origin of the Pleiades or the Orion system of stars, and thus has no control over them. The existence of the heavenly bodies manifests the ineptness of man.

38:39-41 God created the innate behavior of animals in order that they provide food for themselves. No man can answer why certain animals behave in a particular manner in providing food for both themselves and their offspring. Job is asked to conclude that only God instilled this behavior in animals.

Chapter 39

39:1-30 The examples of animal life that are given in this chapter illustrate the work of God in creation. All organic life did not evolve into the behavior and beauty that is portrayed in this chapter. From the very beginning that started with their creation, God instilled within all animal life behavior that would be necessary for life to exist on the face of the earth. All animals were created to be able to exist in the wild, and thus without the caring hand of man. But in order for wild animals to continue their existence, they had to be instilled with behavioral characteristics that would allow them to continue their existence as the animal community. A circle of life was established by God, therefore, that would result in the preservation of life. ***Ostrich ... unmindful that the foot may crush them:*** God illustrates the marvels of His creation by the seemingly foolish actions of the ostrich who would leave her eggs unprotected on the ground. But even though seemingly foolish by man, the ostrich has survived throughout history. Therefore, before man would consider something in nature as wrong behavior, man should think again, for that which seemingly behaves foolishly has survived for thousands of years. ***The horse:*** Man is not as strong as the horse, for the horse's strength is manifested in his courage in the midst of the battle. He does not turn from the battle because of fear. At the sound of the trumpet call for battle, he rushes with speed into the defenses of the enemy. ***Toward the south:*** Who can understand bird migration? God challenges Job to determine why birds migrate to the south and why the eagle makes her nest in the high rocks.

Chapter 40

40:1,2 God's challenge to those of His creation is that the created, including man, cannot enter into a debate with the Creator. The fact that God is the creator answers the argument that man cannot fully comprehend the nature of God. And since man cannot fully comprehend the Creator, man cannot understand all the ways of the Creator.

40:3-5 ***I am vile:*** Job was certainly impressed with God's creation. But he was more impressed with the Creator who stood behind His work and made it possible to continue. He was so impressed that he stood in silence before God. And thus is revealed the means by which God sought to answer Job. God gave no specific answers for Job's questions. He only asked Job to trust Him in His work among men because He was working behind the scenes of His creation.

40:6-24 ***Will you also annul My judgment:*** Job had been presumptuous in assuming that he could carry on in a debate with God. God's focus on the wonders of creation put Job in his place as a man. In the revelation that follows, God again put Job in his place for charging Him with unrighteousness in His control of the world. God rebuked Job for his criticisms. He then asked Job to sit and take His place in ruling the world. ***Judgment:*** Though the word "judgment" refers to many things, in this context it probably refers to how God determines His control of creation. Since this is what Job questioned, we would assume that God was addressing Job's complaints. In this context, therefore, God challenged Job. Job had complained to God concerning His administration of the world, in which challenge Job was assuming that he could do better. Job's questioning was based on his extreme suffering as a righteous person. Therefore, God asked Job to put himself in the position of God and assume the administration of the physical world. If he could administer the affairs of the creation, then he would have a right to make judgments concerning the suffering of man. ***Behemoth:*** This word is a transliteration of the Hebrew word that is used in this verse. There has been much dispute over the nature and description of the animal to which reference is here made. The same is true of the word Leviathan that is later used to refer to some animal (41:1). Some have assumed that these were actual animals. Others have been more metaphorical in interpreting

the words. However, if the words are metaphorically used, then the metaphor came from actual animals. The beasts are here metaphorically used to picture the power of God over the physical world. Behemoth was created at the same time as man. Contrary to the weak physique of man, the strength of the Behemoth was immense. His tail was like a cedar tree and his muscles like stones, with bones like bars of iron. He was so large that the Jordan during flood season did not slow him down. Bible students have made their comments on this animal while assuming that dinosaurs did not in ancient times coexist with man. Since no animal exists today that would fit the description of this animal, we would assume that one of the dinosaurs that existed either previous to or at the time of Job, would fit the description of both Behemoth and Leviathan. Whatever the case, Job was familiar with the animal.

Chapter 41

41:1-5 ***Leviathan:*** This is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that is used in the text. Since it has been proved from archaeological discoveries that men in ancient times coexisted with dinosaurs, we would assume that the description of this animal fits one of the dinosaurs that is now extinct, but was known by Job. In this chapter this animal was used to metaphorically describe the force of God that is far greater than that of man. By using a living creature that was known by Job, God's point was that man is insignificant in comparison to the great beasts that God created. Job had assumed that he was eligible to contend with God. But as a man, Job could not in strength even compete with the large animals of creation. ***Draw ... with a hook:*** God somewhat chided Job with the greatness of the Leviathan. He could never be tamed as a pet by men and led about by a rope. If man could never tame the Leviathan, then certainly man cannot control the creation.

41:6-11 The Leviathan was some type of sea monster. He was so big that he could never be captured and used by man for food. The point is that no man can stand against the Leviathan. The symbolism is that no man can stand before and against God. If any man would dare to bridle the strength of God, he would be overcome.

41:12-34 The description of this animal was not complete. It is thus difficult to identify him from either living animals or from the fossil records. How he is described, however, indicates that no weapon of man of the time of his existence could subdue him. And thus the point is clear for God using this animal as an illustration of His power that is beyond the understanding of man. No matter how powerful a man was, he could not capture or control either the Behemoth or Leviathan. Job was presumptuous, therefore, to even consider that he as a man could be in a position to debate with God concerning issues that affected him.

Chapter 42

42:1-6 ***You can do everything:*** By this time in the narrative, Job had learned his lesson. He knew that he had become arrogant and challenging in his attempts to question God. His suffering had driven him to complain, and in his complaining he was driven to feelings that he had by this time realized were arrogant in reference to his faith in God. God's answer to him convinced him of the omnipotence of God. God is omniscient, and thus knows all things. Even though he did not understand all the implications of his suffering, Job was convinced by God's response that He had all things under control. If we blame God for suffering in our lives, then we do not understand the purpose for which the world was created. The world is only a temporary dwelling for God's children. It is an environment wherein sin has been introduced, and thus we must not expect that the world would be free of suffering. Only those who see this world as the final existence of man feel that they have a right complain. But when one discovers the eternal life that God provides for those who believe, then he understands that this world was created only for the purpose of bringing the righteous into eternity. Job did not have the knowledge of salvation in Jesus. We do, and thus, Christians have little justification for any complaining against God who is working all things together for His purpose (See Rm 8:28). ***I have heard of You:*** Job now understood that his knowledge of God was greatly limited. At the time these events took place in the life of Job, there was little revelation concerning God. All knowledge of God came from the creation (Rm 1:20), and His revelation of Himself through the fathers of families (Hb 1:1,2). But now that we have the privilege of a greater revelation from God through His word, then we find comfort in knowing that God has all things under control. We are also encouraged by men as Job who remained faithful to God, though he did not have all the revelation that we have concerning the eternal purpose of God. If we fall because of suffering and calamity in our lives, therefore, we have little excuse before God. We thank God for the great histories of men of faith that are provided in His word. ***My eye sees You:*** The knowledge of God among the people of Job's day was limited. Even Job had a limited knowledge of God before God's revelation to Him through his suffering. The Bible interpreter must always keep in mind that the book of Job must not be interpreted through our knowledge of God that is revealed through the entire revelation of the Bible which we have the privilege of possessing. Those who first read the narrative of the book of Job possibly had only the book of Job and God's revelation through the fathers of the families. The reason why God allowed Job to suffer was to add further revelation for man to give a better understanding of his situation in this world in reference to the work of God. We know of no other occasion when God allowed Satan to try specific individuals as he did Job. God's purpose for allowing Job to suffer was for our benefit. If God allowed such suffering to come upon Job in this manner, then the limited suffering that we endure in life is not significant enough that we should complain against God (See comments Rm 8:18). ***I abhor myself:*** God chastised Job for thinking too much of himself. But at this time God's answer had humbled Job to repentance. When Job realized his insignificance in comparison to the greatness of God, his faith in the power of God increased (Is 6:5). Every man must be reminded that he is as nothing compared to the greatness of God. However, when one becomes a child of God, he must remember that God knows each one of His children.

Epilogue
(42:7-17)

Outline: (1) Job intercedes for friends (42:7,8), (2) Restoration of health and wealth (42:9-17)

JOB INTERCEDES FOR FRIENDS

42:7,8 After the drama of Job's suffering, and with his new understanding of God, Job responded in a positive manner by recognizing his humble nature in comparison to God. The friends of Job, on the other hand, had behaved themselves without mercy toward Job. They had sinned. Eliphaz, possibly the older of the friends, was commanded to ask Job to pray for their forgiveness. The prayer would be beneficial for Job in his personal forgiveness of the friends. The fact that Eliphaz had to request Job to pray for him and the friends would motivate humility on the part of the friends and their understanding that God was pleased with Job. What is manifested in the integrity of Job was his forgiveness of his friends. In the depths of his calamity he was accused and verbally abused by his friends. Nevertheless, when his ordeal was over, he forgave them. Forgiveness was for himself, for without it his lack of forgiveness would turn to bitterness. He remembered to forgive because God forgave him.

RESTORATION OF HEALTH & WEALTH

42:9-17 ***When he prayed:*** Evidently, the condition for returning the fortunes of Job was based on Job's forgiveness of his friends. His forgiveness was manifested when he prayed for them. As a result of his forgiveness of his friends, Job's wealth was doubled (See 1:3). He again had children (See 1:2). His daughters were the most beautiful in the land. Evidently, Job became so prosperous after his suffering that he gave the daughters an inheritance as he did their brothers. ***140 years:*** We do not know how old Job was at the time of his suffering. We would assume that he was an older person because of the position that he held among the people. If we add the 140 years to his age at the time of suffering, we would estimated that he was possibly close to 200 years old when he died. At least he died in the fourth generation of the sons and daughters who were born to him after his suffering.

Psalms

WRITER

The psalms were written by several people. Among the known writers were Moses (Ps 90), David (73 psalms), Solomon (Ps 72 & 127), Asaph (12 psalms), Heman (Ps 88), Ethan (Ps 89), Hezekiah (10 psalms), and the sons of Korah (11 psalms). The remainder were written by unknown writers.

We do not know who collected all the psalms together into the compilation that we presently have in our Bibles today. Jewish tradition gives credit to Nehemiah for doing this. Some have affirmed that Ezra or Hezekiah collected many of the psalms. Since David was the sweet singer of Israel, and a skilled musician, we would assume that he began the compilation of the psalms during his reign as king of Israel (See 1 Sm 16:16,18; 2 Sm 6:5; 1 Ch 16:4-6). He was a poet of Israel (2 Sm 1:19-27), and one who was familiar with music and musical instruments with which many of the psalms were sung (Am 6:5). Being one who was filled with the Holy Spirit (1 Sm 16:13), we would assume that in writing many psalms himself (2 Sm 23:1,2), he would have brought together into some order for posterity those psalms that were written before and during his life.

DATE

Some Bible students have affirmed that the psalms were written late in the history of Israel, anywhere from 520 to 150 B.C. However, late dates for the writing of the psalms are unlikely since the Alexandrian Jewish translators of the Septuagint had difficulty with some of the ancient Hebrew wording with which the psalms were written. The vocabulary and style of Hebrew poetry by which many of the psalms were written would suggest that most of the psalms originated during the times of David and Solomon. With Moses writing the first psalm around 1400 B.C., and some being written during the post Babylonian captivity (586 B.C.), the psalms were written over a period of approximately 1,000 years. They were collected into the book that we refer to as Psalms by the time of the translation of the Septuagint prior to 150 B.C.

BOOK

The Hebrew word for Psalms is *tehillim*, which means "praises." The English word "psalm" comes from the Greek word *psalmoi*, meaning "songs," or "sacred songs." The root meaning of the word is "impulse," or "touch."

Jesus stated that there were prophecies of Himself in the Psalms (Lk 24:44), and thus some of the psalms were written in view of the Messiah to come. There are approximately 263 passages of the Old Testament that are quoted in the New Testament. Almost one-third of these quotations are from the Psalms (93 quotations). Thus the nature of the Psalms is not only praise, but also prophetic.

The Psalms in our present Bible are divided into five

groups: Book I (Ps 1-41), Book II (Ps 42-72), Book III (Ps 73-89), Book IV (Ps 90-106), and Book V (Ps 107-150). Though collated into five books, there is no chronological order to the Psalms, either by content or date of writing.

The Psalms were written in the lyrics of Hebrew poetry, many of which were adapted to the music of instruments. The style of composition varies from one psalm to another, some being written as odes, that in a figurative manner, narrated the facts of either public or individual histories. Some were written as ethical psalms that presented moral principles for living and faith. Some were elegiac, that is centered around mourning or sadness. Those that were written as dramatic odes were dialogues between the writer and other individuals or peoples. Those that were written in an enigmatic style conveyed teachings that were symbolized by figurative speech in order to stimulate the imagination of the readers.

The Psalms were written as Hebrew poetry. The focus of Hebrew poetry was not on the rhyme of words, but the rhythm of meaning. Thus the stanzas of the poetry were stated as recurring statements in different words, commonly referred to as parallelisms. A parallelism is a recurring thought that is expressed in different words for the purpose of emphasis, amplification, contrast or repetition of the message of the stanzas. The following are the various types of Hebrew parallelisms that are used throughout the Psalms:

Tautological parallelisms use almost identical words in two lines in order to express a key thought.

Antithetic parallelisms state a contrasted thought in the second line to that which is expressed in the first line.

Synonymous parallelisms are psalms that either repeat or expand in the second line that which is stated in the first line, but with different words.

Analytical parallelisms state something in the second line that is the consequence of what is stated in the first line.

Synthetic parallelisms build a thought as the poem develops. The second line adds additional thought, more information, or a variation of thought to that which was stated in the first line.

Cumulative parallelisms develop intensity of thought through repetition. The conclusion leads to a climax of what was stated in the first line.

CLASSIFICATION

The titles that are listed with several of the psalms were not part of the original autograph of the inspired psalms. However, the titles were ascribed to particular psalms before the translation of the Septuagint that was completed around 150 B.C. Because their meaning was so obscure, the translators of the Septuagint were unable to attach a general meaning to many of the titles. It is assumed that the titles referred to the musical setting or the manner by which a particular psalm was to be used in liturgical worship. The titles often ascribe the psalm to a particular writer. Sometimes the title refers to the occasion when the psalm was composed. The titles do not affect the interpretation of any particular psalm, though some seem untrustworthy. Because the titles were not a part of the original autographs, some translations do not include them.

The psalms can be classified according to their content and the nature by which they were written.

1. Psalms of wisdom: 1; 9; 10; 12; 14; 19; 25; 34; 36; 37; 49; 50; 52; 53; 73; 78; 82; 92; 94; 111; 112; 119

2. Messianic psalms: 2; 16; 22; 40; 45; 68; 72; 89; 101; 110; 144

3. Psalms of individual and national lament: 3; 4; 5; 7; 11; 13; 17; 26; 27; 28; 31; 39; 41; 42; 43; 44; 54-57; 59-64; 70; 71; 74; 77; 79; 80; 86; 88; 90; 140-142

4. Penitential psalms: 6; 32; 38; 41; 102; 130; 143

5. Psalms of praise, worship and thanksgiving: 8; 18; 23; 29; 30; 33; 46-48; 65; 67; 74; 76; 81; 84; 87; 91; 93; 103-108; 135; 136; 138; 139; 145-150

6. Liturgical psalms: 15; 20; 21; 24; 84; 95-100; 113-118; 120-134

7. Imprecatory psalms: 35; 58; 69; 83; 109; 137

Throughout the psalms the word "selah" is often used, and included by some translations. It is not known to what this word refers. It has been suggested that the word was placed in the Psalms to indicate a time for a pause. However, the word would have been added after the writing of the psalms. Some translations, therefore, have chosen to delete this word from the text since it was not a part of the original autographs.

Book I
(1:1 – 41:13)

Chapter 1
CONTRAST BETWEEN RIGHTEOUS & WICKED

The first psalm is an introduction to all the psalms. The foundation of the psalm could be Jeremiah 17:5-8. This is a psalm of wisdom, contrasting the fruits of the righteous and wicked. It sets the stage for the contrast between the righteous and wicked that is continued throughout the Psalms.

1:1-3 ***Blessed:*** Happy is the one who does not have a lifestyle of sin. Happiness comes from doing the will of the Lord (Compare Mt 5:3-11). ***Way of sinners:*** Reference is to a way of life, not to the occasional sin of the righteous. The wicked

live according to their lusts. ***Scornful:*** There are those who are indifferent to the way of the believer. But there are those who go beyond indifference by openly launching verbal attacks against the righteous. These are the arrogant who mock the way of righteousness. ***Delight:*** The righteous are defined by their desire to seek the law of God. Their study of and meditation on the word of God identifies them as the people of God (2 Tm 2:15). ***Meditate:*** They do not simply read, but they think on the things that are read. They are students of the Bible. They are those whose minds are focused on godly things. ***Tree planted:*** The metaphor is from a tree that continually receives water because it is planted by a source of water. The faith of the righteous is continually nourished by the word of God (Rm 10:17). ***Prosper:*** The inference is that God is working for the righteous. In the context of most of the psalms, prospering was deliverance from the wicked.

1:4-6 ***Chaff:*** The wheat grain was thrown in the air and the chaff was blown away by the wind (Is 5:24). In God's plan in eternity, the wicked will be blown away from the righteous. In the context of David's life, God took his enemies away by delivering them into the hand of David. ***Will not stand:*** The ungodly will be taken away from the assembly of the righteous. In the final judgment, the ungodly will go away into destruction (Pv 14:12; Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9). ***The Lord knows:*** God knows those who are His. Because He knows those who are His, He is a just judge in judgment over the wicked who will be taken from the presence of the righteous.

Chapter 2
REIGN OF GOD'S ANOINTED

This psalm is Messianic. Though the psalm may have had immediate historical application to events in the early days of Solomon, the prophetic statements in the psalm focus the interpreter on events surrounding that which would take place in the life of the Messiah (See Mt 3:17; At 4:25,26; 13:33; Hb 1:5; 5:5). Though the psalmist was probably not conscious of writing things that were Messianic (1 Pt 1:10-12), he would have understood what he wrote in the context of his life. The historical context was the raging of the nations against Israel.

2:1-3 ***Nations rage:*** These were the Gentiles of non-Israelite nations. In the Acts 4:25,26 context reference to this passage by Luke interpreted it to refer to the hostility of unbelievers against Christians in the early establishment of the church. ***Rage:*** Better, "assembly in tumult." They assembled against God's work through His people, both in the existence of Israel, as well as the secondary application to the church among the nations. ***Vain thing:*** When assembled in rebellion against God's work, then one's efforts are useless. ***His anointed:*** In the historical context reference would possibly have been to Solomon, and those God-anointed Davidic kings who followed him. In the context of Acts 4, however, reference was to King Jesus and the church, against which the nations futilely set themselves.

2:4-5 ***Who sits:*** This personification of God portrayed Him in a sitting position laughing at the rebellion of men who set themselves against His anointed. He sits in the heavenly realm. Reference was not to a specific location, but to a supernatural realm that is the normal environment of Deity. ***He will speak:*** When God speaks against the wicked, then bitter consequences follow for the wicked. They are judged for their wicked works. They are consumed in their unrighteousness. ***Holy hill of Zion:*** God anointed kings in Israel, and placed them on the throne in Jerusalem. While reigning on the throne they represented His authority on earth among the Israelites. Jesus has now been given the authority of this reign (Dn 7:13,14; Ep 1:20-24). He is now reigning in heaven with all authority over all nations (Mt 28:18).

2:6-9 ***I have set:*** These are the words of a king who sets forth his decree. ***You are my Son:*** The fulfillment of these words has been applied to the resurrection of Jesus (At 13:33), the superiority of Jesus over angels (Hb 1:5), and the high priesthood of Jesus (Hb 5:5). ***This day:*** Reference is probably to the totality of what was required for the incarnation of the Son of God. ***Begotten:*** Only here is this word used in the Old Testament in reference to the Lord. In the context of the coronation of the kings of ancient times, when a subject king was crowned, the reigning king of all the territory became the father of the subject king. The subject king, or regional king, owed all his allegiance to the king of the entire empire. ***Your possession:*** In the historical context this would refer to Israel's possession of the land of Palestine. ***Break them:*** Rule over them (Compare Rv 2:27; 12:5). ***Dash***: In reference to the reign of Christ, the meaning would be that He would conquer them through the authority of His word (Jn 12:48). Any who would resist would suffer destruction at the time of His coming (2 Th 1:6-9).

2:10-12 ***Be wise:*** Rebellion would be fruitless and would only lead to destruction. ***Fear ... trembling:*** Only when there is fear and trembling at the power of God does the individual submit to the will of God. It is through fear and trembling that one is led to obedience of the will of God. And it is through obedience that one enjoys true joy and peace of mind. ***Kiss:*** Sign of submission (See 1 Sm 10:1; 1 Kg 19:18; Jb 31:27; Hs 13:2). ***Blessed:*** Only when one brings his life into submission to the will of God is he blessed (See 1 Pt 5:6). Without obedience one always lives with apprehension.

Chapter 3
TRUST IN GOD

This is the first psalm of lament. This is also the first time the phrase "Psalm of David" is used as a title. The word "psalm" (*mizmor*) is used 57 times in reference to different psalms. However, it is never used in the text of the psalms. The historical setting of this psalm was when David hurriedly fled from the insurrection of his son Absalom (See 2 Sm 15:13,14).

3:1,2 ***Increased:*** This was a time of distress and danger in the life of David. He lamented the fact that many had joined Absalom in the insurrection. ***No help for him:*** The adversaries of David deceived themselves into believing that few took the side of David. They were emboldened, therefore, to join Absalom in the rebellion.

3:3,4 In distress, David desired the help of the Lord. As a soldier, the metaphorical use of the word "shield" meant that God would ward off the attacks of the enemy. Thus David here cried out for God's protection. In this case, God heard his cries and delivered him out of the hand of Absalom.

3:5,6 In the midst of danger, David's faith enabled him to lie down and sleep in peace. His faith made it possible not to fear men, for he knew that God was his shield. By fearing God, he conquered the fear of man.

3:7,8 David was delivered. God had delivered David on several occasions in the past. God's deliverance of him in the past was his assurance for God's deliverance in the future. The tense of the verbs here reflect David's confidence in his future deliverance from Absalom (Compare Mk 11:24). ***Salvation:*** In the context of the Psalms, this word generally referred to deliverance from one's enemies. In the spiritual realm, the metaphorical meaning would be deliverance from sin.

Chapter 4
TRUST IN GOD

While living in the midst of those who sought after that which was worthless, the psalmist put his trust in the Lord. In the evening prayers, the psalmist exhorted that men turn to God, and stop working against God and His anointed.

4:1,2 ***You have relieved me:*** The psalmist perceived how the Lord had delivered him in the past, and thus he had faith that God would do the same in his present situation. Those who live righteously before God always have the evidence of God's past work in their lives as evidence of God's present and future work in their lives. ***Sons of men:*** Those who worked against God in order to bring calamity into the life of the psalmist.

4:3,4 God will hear those He has set apart (sanctified) for Himself. ***Stand in awe and do not sin:*** The Septuagint translates this phrase, "Be angry and do not sin." This reading is quoted in Ephesians 4:26.

4:5-8 ***Sacrifices of righteousness:*** The Lord requires the offering of one's life (Compare Rm 12:1,2). It is through this offering that one reaps the blessing of God. Though the unrighteous are cynical concerning the way of righteousness, the psalmist asked that God prove to them His favor of the righteous by manifesting Himself through the righteous. ***Gladness in my heart:*** The heart was the center of the human spirit. The righteous are glad because they focus on the inner man in times of distress. Because they focus on the inner man, they can sleep in peace, regardless of the failure of their crops. Those who walk by faith do not allow the environment in which they live to affect their attitudes or shape their character.

Chapter 5
GOD'S PROTECTION

The word "temple" that is used in this psalm is also used in reference to the tabernacle that housed the ark of the covenant in Shiloh (See 1 Sm 1:9; 3:3). This psalm is ascribed to David who lived before the existence of the temple in Jerusalem. It is a psalm of prayer that was uttered during the priests' service in the tabernacle.

5:1-3 Because God reigned over all things as King in heaven, David expressed his desire that his prayer be heard. David uttered his prayers in the morning and asked God to consider him because of his meditation on spiritual things. David's thinking was not carnal, nor was his mind focused on things of this world. On the foundation of his focus on spiritual things, he asked God to consider his plea.

5:4-7 The Lord disdains the way of the wicked. Because God cannot tolerate the way of the wicked, He will turn from them. God cannot work in the life of the wicked, for they do not desire His presence. The wicked are thus headed for destruction because they have foolishly turned from the source of eternal existence. God is the only source of eternal existence, and no one can exist for eternity outside His presence. ***Worship:*** This is from the Hebrew word that refers to one who bows down. Wherever David was, he would bow down in worship toward the tabernacle of God (Compare Dn 6:10). Bowing down was a posture of humility and his facing the tabernacle was his personal presentation toward what represented the presence of God.

5:8-10 ***Make Your way straight:*** That is, David sought to be led in the right ways of God. ***No faithfulness:*** In contrast to what David sought to be in his spiritual nature, the wicked came forth with an odor of death (Compare Nm 19:11; Rm 3:13). Their speech was filled with deceit. ***Destroy them:*** This imprecatory psalm calls on the judgment of God on the wicked. This is the first imprecatory psalm where David called on God to bring judgment upon his enemies. ***Fall by their own counsels:*** The wicked often fall into the trap of their own deception. While they devise schemes for their own benefit, they fall victim to their own devices.

5:11,12 The joy of the righteous is based on their recognition that God is working in their lives. Though they may fall on unfortunate times in this life, they can rejoice while enduring trials because all things are working according to the plan of God (Js 1:2,3).

Chapter 6
MERCY IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

This is the first of the penitential psalms. These are psalms that express the repentance of the writer (See Ps 6; 32; 38; 41; 102; 130; 143). In this psalm the writer seems to anguish over the pain and sorrow that came as the result of his sin.

6:1-5 The psalmist cried out from sickness and fear of death. He languished over his predicament, lamenting that his body was withering away because of sickness. It is not a principle that God inflicts with sickness those who sin. However, in special situations this may be true (Compare 1 Co 11:30; Js 5:15). ***In death there is no remembrance:*** In the Old Testament there was little hope beyond the grave. In this psalm the writer complained that if he died from his sickness, he would not be able to give glory to God for God's healing hand. Since this is a psalm of David, it may have been that David asked for His healing in order that his recovery from sickness be evidence of God's grace in his life. ***Soul:*** Throughout the

Psalms this word is used to refer to the totality of the human being, including the life, conscience, and personal character of the individual.

6:6-10 ***Weary with my groaning:*** David became so sick that he was in anguish, possibly seeing death as a relief from his suffering. Tears: The anguish of his sickness was so great that he cried until his bed was dampened with his tears. ***Workers of iniquity:*** At the point of death, the poet felt that his enemies had no mercy on him. They saw his sickness and death for their benefit in the sense that David would be removed from them. Those who despised the authority of God's anointed sought for the death of David. ***The Lord has heard:*** Though the enemies hoped for the death of David, he rejoiced in his recovery from sickness, giving credit to God that he was restored to health. He gave credit to the Lord for restoring his health as a direct answer to his prayer.

Chapter 7
DEFENSE AGAINST THE WICKED

This psalm is a lament of David, possibly when he was fleeing from Saul (See also Ps 34; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 142). Nothing is known of Cush, the Benjamite. He could have been the one who brought false charges to Saul concerning David.

7:1-10 Either Saul or Cush was in pursuit of David, and thus David put his trust in the Lord. ***If I have done this:*** David confessed some unknown sin that he may have committed that warranted his flight from Saul. As Job, he had lived righteously before God. In this context he thought that he might have done something for which God was chastising him. If he had done something that was worthy of the chastisement he was suffering, then he felt that he deserved the punishment. But in his flight from Saul, he did not reward Saul with the evil that he had done to him. He spared Saul's life when he could have taken it (See 1 Sm 24:1-22; 26:1-25). ***Judge me:*** David was confident of his righteousness. He was so confident that he called on God to judge him in time with any punishment that God might seek to render to him. If he were found righteous, then he called on the just Judge to render judgment upon the wicked. ***God tries the hearts:*** In the KJV the word "reins" refers to the conscience or heart of the individual. The word "heart" refers to the emotional nature of man, which nature would include the conscience. The Israelites used the words "hearts" ("kidneys") and "minds" as synonyms (4:7; compare Jr 11:20; 17:10; 20:12). ***My defense:*** Or literally, "my shield." David was not arrogant concerning his stand for his righteousness. He was assured before God that God would deal justly with both the wicked and righteous. In this case, he claimed to be right before God, and thus he was assured that God would deal justly in his present predicament.

7:11-17 ***God judges:*** God is a just judge of both the righteous and wicked. His wrath is poured out on the wicked, but His blessings are poured out on the obedient. However, if one does not repent, he will suffer the wrath of God. The rendering of such wrath would be just on the part of God. God cannot justly pour out blessings on the righteous if He does not bring just judgment to the wicked. ***His arrows:*** The metaphor is from a warrior who has his arrow points dipped in tar and ready to shoot fire toward the defense fortifications of the enemy. ***He travails with iniquity:*** The wicked reap the consequences of their evil ways. As a careless hunter who falls into the hole that he has dug to trap his prey, so the wicked fall into the snare of their own deception. All that the wicked would do to advance themselves over their fellow man, eventually comes back to haunt them. If the consequences of their wickedness does not reap it's just reward in this life, God will render judgment at the final judgment (Rv 21:8). ***I will praise the Lord:*** In contrast to the way of the wicked, in the closing doxology of verse 17 David committed himself to the Lord. Making such a commitment meant that David would trust in all the judgments of God, whether in time or at the end of time.

Chapter 8
GOD'S MAJESTY & MAN'S DIGNITY

This psalm portrays the impact of God's magnificent creation on the heart of man (See comments Rm 1:20). The psalmist contrasts the work of God's hand with the insignificance of man. In comparison to the greatness of creation, man seems so insignificant. However, though the creation is so great, God has honored man above all His creation.

8:1,2 ***Glory above the heavens:*** The one who observes the wonders of creation, and yet would deny the existence of God, is a fool according to the psalmist (14:1). The intricacies of life, the order of the universe, and the design of both the physical and biological world cry out that there is a Designer, a Creator behind everything that exists. The philosophy of evolution is no option for the origin of life. It is only an escape for those who do not seek to have the authority of God in their lives.

8:3,4 By comparison, the existence of the universe minimizes the significance of man. There is no comparison between the two. ***Ordained:*** The heavenly bodies have been orderly established in space. ***You visit him:*** Though existing on a small planet of the universe, man is considered and cared for by God. The existence of man on earth alone exemplifies God's consideration for man. Man's very existence is evidence of the fact that he is the most important of all things that God created.

8:5-9 ***Lower than angels:*** The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word here (*elohim*) with the Greek word for angels, which translation is sanctioned by the Holy Spirit when He quoted this verse in Hebrews 2:7. Since angels are spiritual beings, then the translation would be justified by the context. Of all beings that God created through Jesus (Cl 1:16), man was least in comparison to angels. And yet, God exalted man above angels to the point of sending His only begotten Son into the world for the salvation of man (Jn 3:16). ***Dominion over the works of Your hands:*** See Gn 1:26-28. Man rules over the animals of God's creation. ***Paths of the seas:*** Ocean currents prevail throughout the oceans of the world. In this one inspired verse, God revealed a scientific fact. There are numerous such evidences of the existence and work of God. Physical evidence of the world reveals that there is a God above this world.

Chapter 9
THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S JUSTICE

This and the following psalm were probably originally one psalm, as they were composed in the Septuagint. The two are a contrast between the majesty of God (ch 9) and unbelief that prevailed among God's people (ch 10).

9:1-6 ***Marvelous works:*** The confidence of the psalmist was in the marvelous works of God in his past life. This was his confidence for the future. Our hope for the future is based on our perception of God's work in our lives in the past. ***Judging right:*** Reference is to just judgment. ***Put out their name:*** The ancients were concerned about the preservation of their names. The preservation of a family name continued the inheritance of an Israelite family, as well as guaranteed the posterity of the family throughout history. In this case, the psalmist recognized that the name (posterity) of the wicked should be stricken from history.

9:7-12 ***Judge ... refuge:*** Since the Lord renders just judgment without prejudice, then the righteous have a place of refuge in His care. The righteous must never forget that in times of trial and oppression, they will be justly delivered by a just God. ***Refuge:*** The Hebrew word here would literally be translated "high place." In the culture of Israel at the time this psalm was written, the high places were added by the Israelites to their system of worship of false gods. The people were going to the high places for worship, and thus the psalmist metaphorically uses the high place to signify a place to which one could go for protection. The irony of the matter was that reverence for the high places was an indication of Israel's apostasy from God. ***Know Your name:*** Reference is to more than a knowledge of facts about God. The meaning is that one has a relationship with God because of obedience to His will. It is the obedient whom God does not forsake, for they have committed their lives to Him. ***Who dwells in Zion:*** It was not that God physically resided in Jerusalem. The ark of the covenant, the symbol of the presence of God, was placed there by David. This phrase helps us to understand the metaphorical use of many phrases in the Psalms that speak of God in terms of human existence and behavior. The Bible interpreter would do well to caution himself about literalizing statements that should be understood in a metaphorical manner when reading the Psalms.

9:13,14 In order that he might praise the Lord with peace of mind, the psalmist pleaded for deliverance from those who oppressed him. ***Gates of death:*** This would be the gates of Sheol, the abode of the dead. Death is often pictured as a fortified city with gates that open only inward. It is a place that receives the dead, but does not give them up.

9:15-18 The unbelievers of the nation were caught in the mire of their own devices. ***Judgments:*** God is known by His just judgments. If we would conceive of a god who gave unjust judgments, then the god we conceived would be a false god. ***Snared:*** Those who would devise evil against others are caught in their own traps. ***Meditation:*** During the quotation or singing of many of the psalms, there was an interlude for meditation (See 92:3). ***Sheol:*** Those who seek to ensnare the righteous will themselves be ensnared by death. ***The poor:*** See 7:15,16. Justice comes to the poor, not because of their poverty, but because they have been exploited by the wicked (Compare Lk 16:19-31). We must keep in mind that in the economy of Israel, there were laws for the poor to work in order to survive (Dt 24:21). However, if they did not work, then there was no excuse for their poverty. If they were not allowed to work according to the law, then they were oppressed or exploited, and thus their oppressors would reap the vengeance of God.

9:19,20 In the conclusion of this psalm, the psalmist called on God to condemn those who oppressed the poor by not allowing them to work in the farming economy of Israel. The psalmists added that the nations should fearfully submit in order to understand that they are men and not gods over their own destiny.

Chapter 10
DEFEAT OF THE WICKED

In describing the character and behavior of the wicked, the psalmist opened this psalm with complaint. However, the psalmist concludes with confidence in the work of God to deliver the righteous.

10:1-6 ***Afar off:*** It is natural for the believer to feel that God has distanced Himself from us when we are in trouble. The fact is that God has not distanced Himself from us. We have moved away from Him. Job wondered why God would allow great calamity to come upon him if He were a God who is transcendent in the affairs of man (Jb 13:24). God is transcendent, but He also allows life and nature to continue their natural courses. The believer must remember that God does not move away from him in the time of trouble. ***Boast:*** In his oppression of others, the wicked person manifests his arrogance. And because the wicked person is proud, he will not submit to the will of God. Since the things of the world are his idols (Cl 3:5), the wicked man does not seek that which is above this world. It is for this reason that God is not a part of his thinking. According to the psalmist, the person who behaves as this is actually an atheist. He lives as if there were no God. ***Not be moved:*** Secure in his secular materialism, the atheist unfortunately assumes that possession of the things of this world will bring security, and thus one will not be moved.

10:7-11 The behavior of the materialistic atheist is against society. He views society as a means by which he can maintain his way of life. Thus in his arrogance he looks down on all those he would use to maintain his way of life. From what the psalmist says in this context in defining the unrighteous materialist, it is evident that the materialist uses society to maintain his existence. He views the poor as an opportunity for exploitation. This would be the employer who has no consideration for his employees. In the farming economy of Israel, the materialist would actually be the cause of the poverty of others. ***God has forgotten:*** The materialist has no conscience about his oppression of the poor. He has forgotten that all evil will eventually be revealed in a day of judgment (Ec 12:14; 2 Co 5:10).

10:12-15 ***Renounce God:*** Or, why do the wicked despise

God and reject any judgment concerning his evil deeds. The righteous must remember that judgment will eventually come upon the wicked. Though this judgment may not come in the lifetime of the oppressed, or during the existence of this world, it will eventually come. ***You will not require it:*** The self-deception of the oppressor is that he feels he will get away with his oppression. There is no sense of accountability in his thinking. Religious faiths bring a sense of accountability. Accountability is that one recognize he will give an account of his actions before God (2 Co 5:10). Without this sense of accountability, men will deceive themselves into thinking that they can get away with their evil deeds. In the historical setting of the psalm, the wicked were the cause for the existence of the poor. ***Break the arm of the wicked:*** The psalmist called on God to bring immediate judgment on the wicked oppressor. He called for relief from oppression for the sake of the poor.

10:16-18 ***The nations are perished out of His land:*** The historical context of the psalm seems to be the oppression that prevailed in Palestine by the Canaanites because the Israelites did not completely drive them from the land. As a result, the Canaanites frequently oppressed the Israelite farmers by raiding their crops. Under the leadership of David, and eventually Solomon, the land was subdued and the oppression of raiding parties both within Palestine and from outside the land, was stopped. The sovereign God answered the prayer of the psalmist. God worked through both David and Solomon to bring peace and security to the land.

Chapter 11
GOD IS OUR REFUGE & DEFENSE

This psalm focuses on the faith that brings courage at a time when one is facing treachery. Faith takes one through great trials, but eventually brings one forth in victory over all adversity and adversaries (See Rm 8:31-39).

11:1-3 ***Flee:*** The historical setting of the psalm may have been in the final days of David in Saul's court. Saul had become a law unto himself. The legal system had thus broken down, and there was no legal system before whom David could take his plea of being unjustly accused by Saul. Saul determined to kill David, and thus the advice given to David was that he flee to the mountains.

11:4-7 ***Lord is in His holy temple:*** The temple, or dwelling place of God, is heaven. In this statement the faithful are assured that the sovereign God continues to reign over all things, though justice on earth has been dispelled by the unjust. ***His eyelids test:*** As one would squint to scrutinize in judgment, so God intensely judges the affairs of man. The righteous are tried in order to prove their faithfulness. God's loving chastisement of the righteous is a judgment of the wicked, for He does not manifest Himself in the lives of the wicked as He does in the lives of the righteous. The chastisement of the righteous is a condemnation of the wicked. ***Fire and brimstone:*** This would be the searing heat of the winds that came off the desert. In later biblical writings, fire and brimstone became a figure of the judgments of God (See Lk 17:29; Rv 9:17; 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). ***Portion of their cup:*** This was the portion that was allotted to them. ***The righteous Lord:*** Since the Lord is righteous, He sees the righteous. And since the righteous live after His will, they behold His righteousness. One cannot know the righteousness of God unless he lives according to the will of God. ***See His face:*** This phrase comes from cases where one was granted the opportunity to be in the presence of a king (See 2 Kg 25:19; Et 1:14).

Chapter 12
HELP AGAINST THE TREACHEROUS

This is a psalm in which the writer cries out for help in the midst of a society that is ruled by the ungodly. In the cry for help, the psalmist pleads to God for condemnation of the wicked. He was confident that God would deliver him from peril by bringing down judgment on the ungodly.

12:1-4 In this psalm David lamented that the ungodly flourished in society. ***One speaks vanity:*** Hypocrisy and deception define the culture of an ungodly society. In such societies suspicion and cynicism prevail. The love of one's neighbor had diminished in this case to the point that it was a burden for the righteous to live in society. ***Cut off flattering lips:*** "Cut off" means to put an end to. Since flattery in this context was an effort of one person to manipulate another for his own evil means, God cut off the hypocritical tongue of the deceptive in order to aid the righteous. ***With our tongue:*** With caution one should consider those who speak with an abundance of words. The ungodly used unfair and deceptive speech to rule over the innocent.

12:5-8 The oppressed must be patient for the deliverance of God. During their oppression, the righteous may think that God has forsaken them. However, in the historical case of this psalm, God took action to deliver the oppressed. ***You will keep ... preserve:*** Though it may seem that the wicked prevail in society, God reassured the righteous that they would overcome. ***The wicked walk:*** When vile men are honored by society, then the wicked prevail. When known corrupt politicians maintain office, then society has signed its own doom. The example of ungodly leaders encourages societies to digress morally.

Chapter 13
HELP IN TIMES OF AFFLICTION

The historical setting of this psalm was probably when David was fleeing from the jealous hand of Saul who sought to kill him (1 Sm 27:1). David expressed his despair, but knew that God had not forsaken him.

13:1-6 In four questions in verses 1 & 2, David expressed his frustration concerning the increase of the ungodly. It seemed that evil prevailed over righteousness throughout the land. He expressed his frustration because he was fleeing from what he believed was a majority of society who had turned against him. ***Enlighten my eyes:*** Seeing God's deliverance was what David sought. ***Sleep of death:*** David cried out for deliverance while he was alive, and before he died. Salvation: As in many psalms, the word "salvation" is used here to refer to God's deliverance from death. In this case, David trusted that God would deliver him from the hand of Saul. God allowed David to fall into the turmoil of a pursued fugitive in

order to manifest His deliverance of His people. In times of trial, therefore, the righteous must be patient in their faith that God will deliver. Though everything may seem to be against them, they will eventually be delivered.

Chapter 14
FOOLISHNESS OF WICKED MEN

The first verses of this psalm were quoted by Paul (See Rm 3:10-12). It is a psalm that manifests the foolishness of the wicked in view of the faith of the righteous. Much of the content is also expressed in Psalm 53.

14:1-3 ***The fool:*** It is not that the fool is intellectually challenged. Emphasis here is on the moral perversity of the one who rejects accountability to the will of God in his life. In saying that there is no God, the foolish one has rejected the eternal moral standard by which all men will be judged (See Jn 12:48; 2 Co 5:10). Thus the fool in this context is the one who lives with no conscience of accountability before an eternal Judge of all things. ***All have gone aside:*** The one who is void of morals will live as if there is no God. God looks for the righteous by discovering their works (Compare Js 2:17-26). ***Filthy:*** Those who do no good are tainted in the eyes of God, for their faith is dead.

14:4-7 Those who give up on the morals of God establish their own morals. But the morals they establish for themselves lead to corrupt societies in which there is little love of one's neighbor. ***In great fear:*** A society that is controlled by crime is a society in which there is great fear. ***Generation:*** Or, "dwelling," "posterity." ***His refuge:*** Because the oppressed make God their refuge, they are derided by the wicked. ***The captivity of His people:*** Job 42:10 uses this phrase to refer to the restoration of Job's prosperity after his suffering. And before Israel went into Babylonian captivity, the phrase was used by both Hosea (Hs 6:11) and Amos (Am 6:14). Therefore, the phrase here does not mean that the psalm must be dated according to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities of Israel, but to a time when God's people are restored to prosperity after being disciplined by God for their sin.

Chapter 15
CITIZENS OF ZION

This is the first liturgical psalm. It was a psalm that was used in worship. It is a devotional psalm that describes the positive and negative sides of the worshiper of God. In order to be a devoted worshiper of God, the psalmist calls on the worshiper to render obedient service to God. The psalm was possibly used to prepare worshipers when they came to the sanctuary of God to offer their sacrifices, or to serve as priests when they were assigned temple duty.

15:1-5 ***Tabernacle:*** The tabernacle was a visible structure that represented the presence of God. In this context, reference was to asking who would be able to stand in the presence of God. The psalmist then defined the character of those who would be in the presence of God. ***Walks uprightly:*** Righteous behavior of life. ***Works:*** Does that which is good in response to faith. ***Speaks truth:*** Does not lie or speak hypocritically. ***Does not backbite:*** Does not speak behind the back of someone in order to destroy his reputation. ***Nor does evil:*** In loving his neighbor as himself he does not work against his neighbor. ***Nor makes a reproach:*** Does not slander his neighbor. ***Vile person is despised:*** He is disgusted with those who do wickedly. ***He honors:*** He aligns himself with those who do good. ***He who swears:*** Though it may be to his own detriment, he promises to do that which is right and fair to his neighbor. ***Money for interest:*** He seeks to help his neighbor by lending money without interest, and thus he does not take advantage of his neighbor when he has fallen into hard times. ***Nor takes reward:*** He does not take a bribe (Ex 23:7,8; Dt 16:19; 27:25). ***Never be moved:*** Being a dependable person, the one who lives according to the preceding principles will not be changed by the changing times.

Chapter 16
SUSTAINED & DELIVERED

In view of the quotation of verse 10 of this psalm in Acts 2:25-28,31; 13:35, we must conclude that some statements of this psalm are Messianic. In its immediate historical context, it was a psalm that focused on the posterity of the godly.

16:1-4 The psalmist trusted in God to preserve him. ***LORD:*** This initial word that is used in verse 2 is from Yahweh. This is the personal reference to God that was used in Israel. ***Lord:*** This word with small letters is *Adonai*, which refers to master or ruler. ***Goodness:*** This verse indicates the thought of 1 Corinthians 15:58 where it is stated that the believer's works are not useless when done in the Lord. The psalmist affirmed that in God he was empowered to do good, and that his good would be remembered by the Lord. ***Their drink offerings:*** In contrast to those who offer sacrifice to other gods, the one who serves the one true and living God is reassured that he is offering to One he did not create after his own imagination.

16:5-8 ***Portion ... lot:*** As the land of promise was given to Israelite families by lot (Ja 13:7; 14:2), so the psalmist says that his portion or lot is the Lord. As the land maintained the people with physical food, so the Lord will sustain those who have their portion with the Lord. ***The lines:*** The metaphor would find its meaning in the borders that defined the portion of land that was allotted to each family in the land of promise. One's spiritual portion that was in the Lord was pleasant. It is a spiritual heritage that can be given to generations to come. ***My heart also instructs:*** In times of quiet solitude one's conscience is instructed by the word of God which is the guide that keeps one on the right way. ***Right hand:*** The one who stood at the right hand of the king defended the subjects of the kingdom. The Lord was the right hand defender of those who trusted in Him.

16:9-11 ***My glory:*** Or, my soul (7:5; 30:12; 57:8). ***Not leave my soul in Sheol:*** The psalmist was here looking beyond the grave. Though revelation in the Old Testament is brief concerning the resurrection of the dead, these verses gave some light for those who lived before Jesus. However, a secondary fulfillment of these words is understood from Peter's quotation of them in Acts 2:25-28. Reference by Peter was to the resurrection of Jesus. ***Holy One to see corruption:*** The application to the body of Jesus defines the prophetic ap-

plication of the psalm. After His crucifixion and burial, Jesus' body did not decay away. It was resurrected (See At 13:35). The psalmist closed this psalm by reaffirming the fact that faith in God is the guarantee for life past the grave.

Chapter 17
PROTECTION FROM OPPRESSION

The historical background of this psalm may be David's flight from Saul (See 1 Sm 23:25,26). When David wrote the psalm he and his companions seem to be in imminent danger. Thus the psalm is a lament of David over his predicament. He asks God for deliverance.

17:1-5 ***Hear the right:*** David was unjustly accused by Saul. He thus asked God for vindication and justice. ***My sentence:*** David had received no justice from Saul, and thus asked for just judgment to come from God. ***Tested my heart:*** David was confident that God knew his heart. He was not an insurrectionist against the reign of Saul, who was at the time God's anointed king of Israel. Though Saul wrongly assumed that David thirsted for the power of the throne, such was not in the heart of David. ***Uphold my steps:*** David had followed in the instructions of God, and thus here expressed confidence that he would not fall from the way of God.

17:6-12 ***You will hear me:*** David's relationship with God reassured him that God would hear his pleas. Show: In a time of despair, David wanted a manifestation of God's grace. He cried out for deliverance for himself and his companions from Saul who sought his death. ***Apple of the eye:*** This was a term that expressed endearment (See Dt 32:10; Pv 7:2; Zc 2:8). It referred to the pupil of the eye, the delicate part of the eye that needed protection (Dt 32:10; Pv 7:2). ***Shadow of Your wings:*** The metaphor here would symbolize protection from danger (Rt 2:12; Ps 36:7; 57:1; 61:4). ***Closed up their fat hearts:*** In the fatness of their prosperity, they had hardened themselves against the needs of others. We would assume that application here was to Saul and his ruling cronies who became socially disconnected from the needs of the people. Their concern was only to maintain their positions of power in the kingdom. They had been corrupted by absolute power, the curse of those who would seek perpetual rule over a people. ***Like a lion:*** The ruling class of Saul's companions had set themselves against David and his companions. As a lion lurks in ambush for her prey, so they sought to capture and kill David.

17:13-15 ***Confront him:*** This is a prayer of David that God bring down judgment on his oppressors. ***Wicked with Your sword:*** God brings judgment on men by the proxy of others. He brought the judgment of captivity on Israel by the proxy of both the Assyrians and Babylonians (Is 10:5). In this case, however, the "sword" of God was directed toward the godly, that is David and his companions. Thus in the prayer, David asked God to take this sword from him in order that he be delivered from the ungodly, for he assumed that He was using Saul to punish him. His plea was based on the fact that those who would seek to harm the godly identified themselves as the ungodly. ***When I awake:*** Statements as this clearly affirm that David believed in the bodily resurrection. In this context, he would enjoy God's deliverance in this life, as well as when he would be resurrected from the dead. ***See Your face:*** See 105:4; Nm 12:8; 2 Ch 7:14. Emphasis is on being in the presence of God, not seeing a literal face, for God is spirit and has no face (Jn 4:24).

Chapter 18
VICTORY & DOMINION

This is a psalm of victory and parallel with the events in 2 Samuel 22. It is a psalm that expresses the psalmist's struggles to accomplish deliverance from those who pursued him. As a psalm of David, he praises God for his deliverance from Saul.

18:1-6 ***Strength ... rock ... fortress ... deliverer ... shield ... horn ... high tower:*** This series of words exalts the Lord as the security upon which one should base his life. It is God in whom we flee for refuge. He is the assurance of our faith. He is our tower of defense against all who would seek to destroy us. ***Saved from my enemies:*** As a praise psalm from David, David is confident that he will be delivered (saved) out of the hand of his enemies. ***He heard my voice:*** God answers the prayers of those who exalt Him in their lives according to the metaphors of verses 1 & 2. The magnitude of David's praise was manifested by the extreme circumstances in which he was when fleeing from Saul. David was in such peril that he feared for his life. Death was almost certain (2 Sm 22:5). But God delivered him. He did not offer a ritualistic prayer, but an outcry to God for deliverance. God allowed him to go to the extreme of despair before He delivered him. God will allow us to fall into great calamity before He delivers us. He does this in order that we have evidence of His work in our lives for future reference.

18:7-15 God's deliverance of His people is often expressed in Scripture through the metaphors of natural phenomenon (See Ex 19:16-18; Jg 5:4,5; Jb 38:1; Is 29:6). The occurrence of such natural happenings often brings fear to man, and thus the metaphors are used in order to manifest that God is taking action in order to influence man. The meaning here is an encouragement to the righteous. If God can control the physical world with such power, then certainly He wants us to understand that He can work in the affairs of man in order to deliver the righteous from calamity. He is sovereign over the universe, and thus sovereign over all life of the world.

18:16-19 ***Drew me out of many waters:*** At a time when David thought that he would drown in the calamities that had befallen him, God came to his rescue. ***Too strong:*** He admitted that the enemy was greater than his army, and thus it was only because of the strength of the Lord that he was delivered. ***Day of my calamity:*** When he was his weakest as a fugitive, his enemies launched their attacks against him. But the Lord stood by him. ***Delighted in me:*** Because God was pleased with the humble and godly character of David, He delivered him in order that others might understand that God stands behind those who are His.

18:20-24 ***Reward:*** The outcome of David's faithfulness was his deliverance from his enemies. ***Ways of the Lord:*** The reward of David's obedience to the word of God was his salvation (deliverance) from the hand of Saul. David, as Job,

was confident of his standing before God. The confidence of such men must not be interpreted as arrogance. They simply obeyed the will of God. We can have the same confidence today if we will obey the will of God. ***Did not put away:*** He did not ignore the will of God. ***Kept myself:*** He made a free-moral choice to stay away from evil. His reward for his obedience was that God delivered him out of the hands of Saul.

18:25-29 God will extend mercy to those who have shown mercy to others (See comments Js 2:13). He will forgive those who forgive their fellow man (Mt 5:7; 6:14,15; 18:23-25). These are the principles upon which God desires that governments rule among men. ***Pure:*** Only one with a pure heart can understand God who is pure (Mt 5:8; 1 Jn 3:3). ***Devious:*** Or, perverse. ***Haughty eyes:*** God will bring down the proud (Lk 18:14). ***Light my candle:*** David's obedience would be a light to those who walked in darkness. In this historical context, God would make it known through David that He was working through him in order that he become the king of Israel. ***By You:*** With the help of God, David was able to be victorious over his enemies.

18:30-45 ***Shield:*** God is a shield of defense only to those who put their faith in Him to protect them. ***Who is God:*** Since there is no God other than the one true and living God who reveals these words to us through David, we conclude that all other gods are the invention of the imagination of men. Those who believe in these gods are actually trusting in their own skills to be delivered in times of trouble. But those who trust in God are trusting in a force that is outside themselves. One's accomplishments are limited to working things out according to the abilities of men. But when one trusts in God, then he has no fear of being overcome by men who trust in their own imaginations. It was the God of heaven who took David as a shepherd boy and made him the king of Israel. David's use of the metaphors of war in this section confirm that he knew that he could not have done all that brought him to be the king of Israel without the help of God. His kingship was evidence of the fact that God worked in his life. ***Necks of my enemies:*** David's conquest was so forceful that his enemies turned their backs and ran from him. ***Head of the nations:*** David was so militarily dominant over those who opposed him that God extended his influence to nations that were not of Israel. ***Foreigners:*** During the end of David's reign he had subdued the enemies of Israel. His military strength was so great that the surrounding nations were intimidated by the army of Israel. No nation attempted to attack Israel, and thus during the reign of Solomon, David's son, peace prevailed.

18:46-50 ***It is God:*** Though David had the opportunity to take credit for all his accomplishments, he wanted us to recognize that it was God who must take the glory, for it was God who made everything possible in his life. The reason why David was a man after God's own heart was that he had the heart of God. He knew who he was because of God's work in his life.

Chapter 19
THE WORKS & WORD OF GOD

This great psalm begins with the glory of God's work in creation, and then moves into God's authority in His creation through the power of His word.

19:1-6 ***The heavens declare:*** The created universe is a continual witness to the existence of God (Rm 1:20). This statement assumes that the honest beholder will conclude that there is a God, a designer, who is behind all that exists. ***The firmament shows:*** A design presupposes that there is a designer. In this case, the firmament (design) presupposes that there is a Designer (God). The creation was so intricately designed that it proclaims the existence of its Designer. The more scientists discover the order of that which exists, the greater the evidence that this universe was the product of God. ***Their line:*** God established limits or boundaries for that which was created in order to establish order in the universe (Compare At 17:26). ***All the earth:*** Paul quoted these words in Romans 10:18 in reference to the preaching of the gospel to all the world. Since all the earth is the creation of God, then God is interested in giving everyone on earth an opportunity to hear the gospel (2 Pt 3:9). The purpose for the creation of the world was to populate heaven. And thus it would be fitting for Paul quote from this context in order to reaffirm the reason why the universe was created. ***The sun:*** Though God established the boundaries of the sun, its radiant influence is felt throughout its dwelling (tent). It shines on both the good and evil (Mt 5:45). In this context, the radiance of the sun is metaphorical of God's glory that is manifested to all mankind. All the earth, and both good and evil among its inhabitants, profit from God's work of creation.

19:7-10 ***Law of the Lord:*** It was fitting in the context of a psalm on creation to reveal that which brings order to the inhabitants of the world. There are seven statements in this context that define the law of God. ***Perfect:*** The law of God is complete for the conversion of the soul (Jn 17:17; 1 Pt 1:23). ***Sure:*** The word of God is a trusted witness of God's will among men, and thus it can be trusted to be a true guide for man. The untrained, or uneducated, can trust it to find their way into eternity. ***Right:*** The commands and directions of God (statutes) are the trusted and true expressions of the will of God for man. They are right because obedience to them brings joy and peace of mind. ***Pure:*** God's commandments enlighten one to the truth. They bring light to darkness (See 1 Jn 1:7). ***Fear:*** The fear of the Lord produces within us pure religion as we manifest our faith through expressions of kindness to others (See Js 1:27). Reverent awe always keeps us close to God, which closeness makes it possible for us to dwell in eternity (Compare 2 Th 1:6-9). ***True and righteous:*** God's truth is absolute. Obedience to His truth produces right living before God (Jn 4:24).

19:11-14 ***Warned ... reward:*** Because one is warned of destruction when he is disobedient, but learns of rewards for obedience in the word of God, then the word of God must be desired far above gold that will perish. One must desire God's word as he would desire the sweetness of honey. ***Understand his errors:*** Only through the revealed word of God can one understand how to please God. ***Cleanse:*** One is cleansed as he obediently walks according to the will of God (51:6,7). ***Presumptuous sins:*** These would be sins where one would

deliberately act contrary to the word of God. Or, they may be the sin of men who think that they are actually doing God's will, but are ignorant of the will of God. They are presuming to be righteous before God in obedience to their own religious traditions, but are actually sinning against the word of God. ***Dominion:*** When one would continue to walk in a deliberate sin, then that sin becomes a way of life, and thus dominates the individual. ***Words ... meditation:*** Not only must one's speech testify to the fact that he is seeking God, but also his thoughts must be brought under the control of God's word. One's heart must be seeking God in order that words of praise come forth from his heart.

Chapter 20
PRAYER FOR VICTORY

This psalm is closely related to the following psalm because it is a prayer that was uttered on the eve of a great battle. It was a prayer that was answered with victory. As a result, a prayer of thanksgiving for victory was made in Psalm 21.

20:1-5 As a liturgical psalm, it seems that the words of verses 1-5 were spoken to the king by the Levites during the time of offering. Their prayer that was expressed in these words was that the Lord grant the king his wishes in leading the people of God into battle. Since the king was joining with the required burnt offerings, the Levites called on God to bless the king in order to bring "his salvation" to the people. Salvation in this context was the deliverance or protection of the people from those who would oppress them.

20:6-9 While opposing armies trusted in the power of their instruments of war, the righteous king in this context trusted in the Lord. ***Remember the name:*** Remembering the name of the Lord is trusting in His help. ***Save, Lord:*** Both the people and the king trusted in the Lord for deliverance. In the context of this psalm, and in view of what was stated in verses 1-5, the people were asking that they be saved through the Lord's blessing of the king who trusted in the Lord. We should pray for our leaders that they should depend on the Lord. A godless leadership will not lead the people in the ways of God, and thus preserve the moral integrity of a nation.

Chapter 21
DELIVERANCE

The preceding psalm was a request by the Levites during the time of the temple liturgy and burnt offering. It was a request that the king be blessed in his desire to deliver the people of God from an imminent attack. God gave the victory, and thus this psalm is a rejoicing over the victory that was granted by God.

21:1-7 ***His heart's desire:*** The king desired to lead the people in victory over Israel's enemies. This desire was granted by the Lord. ***Blessing of goodness:*** Before the king, God set the blessing of His goodness for the people. ***Crown:*** A crown of victory was placed on the head of the victorious king. The king had asked to be delivered from the enemies, and that request was granted. The psalm expresses the words of the people, probably the Levites. Their prayer in Psalm 20 was answered, and thus they gave praise to God for preserving the king, which meant that the people were also preserved through the victory of the king. ***Length of days:*** See 1 Kg 1:31; Ne 2:3.

21:8-13 ***Will find out:*** The enemies were driven to retreat, and thus the request here was that the king discover the place of retreat of the enemies in order to complete the victory. ***Fiery oven:*** This is the language of the judgment of God (See Ml 4:1; Lk 16:24; Rv 20:14). ***Their fruit ... seed:*** The judgment would be so great that the posterity of the enemies would be destroyed. These enemy nations, therefore, would come to an end. ***Intended evil:*** The motives of the enemies toward the king were evil. But because of the help of the Lord, the enemies had to retreat. ***Be exalted:*** In the victory of the king over the enemies, God was given the glory. Both the people and the king recognized that it was God who gave them the victory.

Chapter 22
CRY FROM ANGUISH & JOY IN PRAISE

Psalms 22, 23 & 24 are Messianic psalms. Psalm 22 focuses on the coming Savior. Psalm 23 pictures the Savior as a shepherd of the people. Psalm 24 proclaims the sovereignty of the Savior. Psalm 22 is quoted seven times in the New Testament in reference to Jesus (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34; Hb 2:12). Psalm 22 should also be studied with Psalm 69 and Isaiah 53. The psalm can be divided into two sections, the first dealing with trials (vss 1-21) and the second with triumph over trials (vss 22-31).

22:1-8 ***My God, my God:*** See Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34. ***Far from helping me:*** In times of despair one feels distant from God, or he feels that God is not giving attention to his calamity. ***But You are holy:*** In contrast to the defilement of man on earth, God is pure and free from all the defilements that beset man. ***Inhabit the praises of Israel:*** God's presence was made known in Israel because He was on the lips of those who gave Him praise (Ml 3:16,17). ***Our fathers trusted:*** Our faith must move us to remember the past when God delivered our fathers from calamity. ***Despised:*** The one suffering in the psalm felt estranged from the people because of the open mockery and reproach that was brought upon him. Derision and scorn distanced him from others, as well as made him feel distant from God.

22:9-21 ***You ... took me:*** The psalmist recounted the security that he felt when in the innocency of childhood. He was then totally dependent on God. Now at this time of calamity in his life, he sought to be in the security and care of God that he had in the past. It was a time when the psalmist wanted to depend on God as a dependent newborn babe. ***Bulls ... of Bashan:*** Bashan was the rich pastureland that was east of the Sea of Galilee. The area was a place of rich pasturelands and great oak trees (See Dt 32:14; Ez 39:18; Am 4:1). The onslaught of calamity was as strong bulls who launched their attack against him. The persecutors gaped as a lion on a sure prey. The picture of these verses is of the crucified Christ during His trials, and eventually His time on the cross. The Messianic picture here is inescapable. The records of the gospel (Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn) reveal the fulfillment of the metaphorical picture that is here prophesied.

22:22-31 ***I will declare:*** The statements in Hebrews 2:11-13 are a reference to the name of Jesus being declared among His disciples. ***Assembly:*** The quotation of this verse in the New Testament is from the Septuagint translation. The Septuagint used the Greek word *ekklesia*. The proclamation of the prayer was to all the people. The proclamation was an exhortation to fear, praise and glorify God. ***Pay my vows:*** In times of trouble vows were made to God. When the day of deliverance came, the one delivered remembered what he had promised the Lord, and thus gave his thank offerings to the Lord. ***The meek will eat:*** After victory over an enemy, Israel ate of the sacrifices that were made to the Lord (See Lv 3:17; 7:16; Nm 15:3). ***All the families of the earth:*** Not only would Israel worship the Lord, but this psalm speaks of all the nations giving praise to God (Compare Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). This is certainly a Messianic prophecy of what would eventually come in reference to Jesus (See Ph 2:5-11; Rv 11:15). ***A seed:*** Reference was to succeeding generations, specifically to the remnant of Israel that would eventually come forth from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. They would come again unto the land of promise and give praise to the Lord.

Chapter 23
OUR SHEPHERD

This is probably the most quoted of all the psalms simply because in a few words it portrays the life of the righteous. Though the righteous must live in a world that is plagued with suffering and turmoil, they must put their faith in God as they struggle through life. The psalm is a sublime utterance of those who are focused on staying close to God.

23:1-4 ***My shepherd:*** As a shepherd boy, David knew the life of a shepherd. He knew the responsibility of guarding the sheep from the perils of life. ***Lack nothing:*** When one submits to the shepherding of God, he trusts that God will provide all that is necessary for survival. David listed seven specific things that the Lord provided as He watches over His sheep. ***Green pastures:*** When sheep are filled, they lie down. Because of the Lord's care over us, we are satisfied with the spiritual food that comes from Him, and thus we take our rest in the shadow of His care. ***He leads me:*** Because the sheep know their shepherd, they are willingly led by Him. We know our Lord, and thus He is able to lead us according to His will to places of security. As calm waters naturally soothe one's mind in times of trouble, so God takes us to places where the turmoil of life can be endured. ***Restores my soul:*** By the calm waters our inner man is renewed and refreshed (2 Co 4:16; Ep 4:23; Cl 3:10). ***Paths of righteousness:*** Because of their trust in the leadership of the shepherd, the sheep will follow the shepherd in going to where he desires that they should go. He thus leads them down paths that take them to that which is good for them. The Lord takes us to His righteousness (See 2 Tm 3:16). The Lord does this in order that His name be glorified among the nations. He is holy, and thus He desires that His people be holy (111:9; Lv 19:2; Mt 6:9; 1 Pt 1:14-16). ***Fear no evil:*** The sheep have confidence in the leadership of the shepherd. Since we have faith that God is head over all things, and that all is under His control, then we are confident that all things will work for our good (Mt 28:19; Rm 8:28; Ep 1:22; Hb 1:3). ***You are with me:*** In God is our faith. He will not forsake those who are His (See Ex 33:14; Dt 31:6-8; Ja 1:5-9). The assurance of the believer is his faith that God will never turn His back on His people. ***Comfort me:*** The shepherd's staff (rod) is for the protection of the sheep when they are under attack. The staff is hooked at the end in order to be used to deliver fallen sheep out of pits into which they may stumble. Knowing that the Lord is in our lives for both protection and deliverance reassures us and gives us great comfort.

23:5,6 ***Prepare a table:*** Near East kings would prepare a banquet for the ones they favored and sought to honor. In the case of God's people, by His provision for their needs, He openly manifests to the nations that they are His people. ***Anoint my head:*** This was the anointing of oil on the heads of the guests. The anointing manifested hospitality. ***Cup overflows:*** God's provision is not limited. ***Goodness and mercy:*** Since God has done so much to and for His people, they are motivated to do good to others and show mercy (Js 2:13; compare 1 Jn 4:19). ***I will dwell:*** Not only do the righteous dwell in the house of God on earth, they will also be in the security of this house when it is taken into heaven (1 Tm 3:15).

Chapter 24
THE KING ENTERS ZION

The historical setting of this psalm may be when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem, to the tent that David had prepared for it (2 Sm 6:1-15). The prophetic nature of the psalm seems to point to the victory of Jesus over death (Cl 2:15; Hb 2:14,15), and His resurrection and reign over all things from heaven (Dn 7:13,14; Ph 2:8-11; Rv 5:11-14; 17:14).

24:1-6 True worship begins by understanding the One who is worshiped. Contrary to those who have created gods after their own imaginations, true worshipers know that the God they worship exists beyond the imagination of man. Though no one can ascend unto God, nor fully comprehend His majesty, the fact that we understand that God exists still generates worship from our hearts. ***Clean hands:*** Only those who do not live in conflict with their neighbors can truly worship God. Those who are burdened with guilt know that their worship is hypocritical. Those who are responding to God with good works can know the God who cares for all men. ***Pure heart:*** The character of our inner person determines our worship. When one is full of forgiveness and mercy, then he can identify with the One he seeks to worship. ***Soul to vanity:*** Compare 1 Jn 2:15-17. One cannot worship the true God while at the same time pay homage to that which is false (12:2), or gods that are the invention of man (31:6). God seeks worship from those who will worship Him in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23,24). ***Even Jacob:*** God seeks for those who would worship Him as Jacob (See Gn 32:22-30).

24:7-10 ***O you gates:*** As the procession to bring the ark to Jerusalem neared the gates of the city, the personification of the gates of the city symbolized that the city should reverently receive the ark of God. ***Lord mighty in battle:*** This procession to bring the ark into the city marked a time when David

had defeated the enemies of Israel. He had defeated them because God worked in order to give him victory. Thus the Lord was strong in battle against all the enemies of Israel. ***Lord of armies:*** Because the Lord had brought victory to the army of David, the Lord was the master of his army.

Chapter 25
PROTECTION, GUIDANCE & PARDON

In the Hebrew text, each verse of this psalm begins with a letter of the 22-letter Hebrew alphabet. It is one of the nine psalms that are written in an acrostic manner. This is a psalm of wisdom that is made up of statements of truth.

25:1-7 ***Do not let me be ashamed:*** Contrary to the one who lifted up his soul in vanity (24:4), the worshiper of this psalm lifted up his soul to praise God. And in doing so, he did not want to be disappointed to have God protect him. He did not want to be disappointed for the sake of all those who worship God. David experienced God's grace and mercy throughout his life, and thus prayed that God extend the same to those who reach out for His salvation. ***Sins of my youth:*** Though David lived with the guilt of inadequacies and failures of his youth, he asked that God not remember his youthful folly. ***Transgressions:*** Or, rebellions.

25:8-15 ***Teach sinners:*** God will instruct the obedient who have lost their way. ***The meek:*** Only when one submits to the Lord can the Lord teach him the right way. ***Those who keep:*** Without submission to the will of God, one cannot be led by God. God does not subjectively lead one against his will. Obedience must be free-morally carried out in the life of the meek. ***Covenant:*** God made a covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai. He was faithful in keeping His part of the covenant, and thus expected Israel to do the same. ***He who fears the Lord:*** If one will reverence God and submit to His will, then God will teach him His way. The obedient will then live in peace of mind. His posterity through his children will continue throughout generations. He will thus benefit from his covenant relationship with God, enjoying the benefits of a spiritual connection with God. ***Secret of the Lord:*** He will be the friend of God (See Jn 15:13-15). ***Out of the net:*** David had given himself to the Lord, and thus the response of the Lord was to guard him from his enemies.

25:16-22 Feeling alone and afflicted, the psalmist turned in supplication to God for help. David may have felt some guilt because of his sins, for he called on God for deliverance out of his calamity that may have been caused by his sin. He was threatened by his enemies, and thus he called out for deliverance because of his trust in God. As Job, he felt that his integrity should justify his plea, and thus result in God's positive response. Israel's deliverance depended on his deliverance.

Chapter 26
SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY & PRAYER

In this psalm David called on an examination of his character and behavior. He affirmed his innocence. As Job, he felt confident that a divine inspection of his life would reveal his innocence.

26:1-7 ***Judge me:*** David cried out for protection, knowing that he stood just before God. ***Integrity:*** He had focused his life on God (See Gn 17:1; Jb 1:1,8; 2:3,9). In his integrity he had trusted in God without living a hypocritical life (See Ja 1:6,7). ***Examine:*** David called on God to thoroughly examine his inner being. ***Lovingkindness:*** David had been merciful to others while walking in the commandments of the Lord. He had kept himself from the company of those who would turn him away from living after the ways of God. He had stayed away from worthless men and those who had created gods and religions after their own desires and behavior. He had remained in the company of those who would influence him for good. ***Wash my hands:*** This was a symbolic act of proclaiming one's innocence or relinquishing of responsibility (Compare Mt 27:24). ***Surround Your altar:*** David sought the activity of holy things. He lived in the company of those who were like-minded. He remained a man of faith in a world that had turned its back on God. ***Voice of thanksgiving:*** He realized all the good that God had done for him, and thus he declared to all God's work in his life.

26:8-12 ***I have loved:*** David aligned himself with those who remained close to God. He thus protested his innocence because he did not associate with the company of the wicked. He cried out that he not be taken away with the wicked in death. David did not keep company with murderers, nor those who dealt unjustly with others. His judgments were not tainted with bribes. ***I will walk in integrity:*** David made a conscious decision to live a life of integrity. As with all good men, to live after the will of God depends on making a decision to live righteously. Living the godly life continually is trying to maintain one's commitment to his decision to walk with integrity. ***My foot stands:*** He felt vindicated after a thorough examination of his integrity.

Chapter 27
TRUST IN GOD

There is a significant difference between the nature of verses 1-6 and verses 7-14 in this psalm. The first section of verses is a praise of God and the second is a plea. From praise to plea, the mood of the psalm changes significantly between the two sections.

27:1-6 ***Light:*** God is light in that He brings truth (4:6; Is 10:17; Mc 7:8; Jn 1:4,9; 8:12; 1 Jn 1:5). ***Salvation:*** In this context and others, the general meaning of this word in the Psalms is salvation from one's enemies. Since the Lord was both light and salvation to David, David did not fear his enemies. Thus the Lord was a fortress against those who would oppose David. ***Eat up my flesh:*** The enemies came to attack and kill. But the Lord brought confusion to the enemies, and thus they did not succeed in their efforts to bring David down. ***Confident:*** The psalmist was not anxious even though he lived with the threat of war. His confidence was in the fact that God, either in life or death, would deliver the righteous out of the hand of all calamity. One can have this confidence only when he seeks first that which is the Lord's (Mt 6:33). ***That I may dwell in the house of the Lord:*** This feeling of David that is expressed throughout the Psalms, enlightens us as to why it was his desire to build a temple to God in Jerusa-

lem. The ark and tabernacle represented the presence of God, and thus David wanted the presence of God close to him in Jerusalem at all times. However, he was not allowed to build the temple, which construction was reserved for his son, Solomon. ***He will hide me:*** David's assurance rested in the fact that God would protect him from his enemies (Compare comments Rm 8:31-38). ***I will offer:*** David's appreciation for his deliverance from his enemies was expressed in his thank offerings to the Lord. He did not live without showing appreciation and recognition that it was the Lord who had delivered him from his enemies (Compare 2 Co 4:15).

27:7-14 The mood of the psalm changes with these words. ***Hear ... mercy ... answer me:*** These are pleading words of complaint. In a time of calamity, it seems that the psalmist felt distant from the Lord. In his frustration, he was seeking the attention of the Lord. However, the psalmist felt that the Lord had hidden His face from him in that He was not responding to his pleas. ***Father ... forsook me:*** Though forsaken by father and mother, God will accept those who are orphaned. Though one may feel totally deserted by everyone, God will still be there. ***Teach ... lead, deliver:*** Once humbled by the calamities of life, one submits to the directions of God. God knows that it is sometimes necessary for one to be discouraged in despair in order to appreciate the adoption of God. ***Wait on the Lord:*** The conclusion of the psalmist is that though one may experience the extremity of calamities, he must have faith that God is there, waiting to deliver the faithful. This is the legacy of Job who waited on the Lord throughout his calamities. In the end, God came to his rescue. In this case, God came to the rescue of David.

Chapter 28
ANSWERED PRAYER

The historical setting of this psalm may be when David was fleeing during the insurrection of Absalom (2 Sm 15:1 – 18:33). The psalm, therefore, was an urgent plea for help from those who had dealt a treacherous blow to David.

28:1-5 The psalmist was in a state of desperation. If the Lord did not answer, he would die at the hands of the wicked. In this case, it was the treacherous insurrectionists who were led by Absalom. ***The pit:*** This common expression refers to Sheol, the place to which it was believed that the spirit goes after the death of the body. ***Cry out:*** This is a strong word in Hebrew. It signifies an urgent cry for help. ***Lift up my hands:*** This was a natural act of one who was pouring out his heart to the Lord. ***Holy sanctuary:*** This was the holy of holies of the tabernacle where the ark of the covenant was placed. ***Workers of iniquity:*** These were the treacherous insurrectionists who had joined themselves to Absalom. Since they had raised their hand against David, God's anointed, they were aligned with the wicked. ***According to the deeds:*** This imprecatory plea was a call of David that God bring down judgment on the insurrectionists. They were committing great evil, and thus were deserving of great punishment. Little did David know that his plea in this request would be answered by the death of his son, Absalom, who was killed against the wishes of David. ***He will overthrow them:*** God overthrew the insurrectionists in order to spare the reign of His anointed, David. David's prayer was answered.

28:6-9 ***He has heard:*** These words of the psalm express the strength of faith. The psalmist was so convinced that God would answer the request of verses 1-5 that these words are written in the past tense as if the request had already been answered (See comments Mk 11:24). In these words, the psalmist broke out in a doxology of praise to God for His deliverance (41:13; 72:18,19; 89:52). ***Strength and shield:*** Those who trust in the deliverance of the Lord have the inner strength that comes from the Lord, as well as a defensive shield against the attacks of the ungodly. ***Save ... bless ... feed ... lift:*** When one puts his trust in the deliverance of the Lord, these are the things that the Lord does for His people. They are saved out of calamity, blessed with life, fed with spiritual food, and lifted up among all as a testimony to the work of God in the lives of His people. The serendipity of trusting in God far excels the cost of faithfulness.

Chapter 29
MANIFESTATION OF GOD

This psalm is a song of worship expressed to God who revealed Himself out of a great storm. The symbolism is not that God is a storm, but that God joins in with the existence of His created natural laws, which laws are manifested by a storm. The heavenly powers join in to give praise to their Creator. This is thus a psalm that manifests the monotheistic faith of the psalmist, as opposed to the prevailing false religions of the time who assigned a god to various manifestations of nature. Pagans worship nature, but the true worshipers worship the God who created nature.

29:1,2 ***Mighty ones:*** These were the mighty forces of nature. A call to worship was made by the mighty ones, the forces of nature. They were called to join in praise to the Creator. ***Beauty of holiness:*** The holiness of God is a beautiful thing if it could be visibly seen. For this reason, we must worship in spirit and the truth of His revelation and holiness (Jn 4:24).

29:3-9 The storm approaches (vss 3,4). After unleashing its power (vss 5-7), it passes (vss 8,9). ***Voice of the Lord:*** The manifestation of the power of the storm gives evidence to the presence of God. But the metaphor of the storm communicates to man the power of the revelation of the word of God. It is a living word that goes forth with great power (Hb 4:12). The voice of God through His word is so powerful that it breaks the cedars of Lebanon. The storm that depicts the power of God's voice is strong as a tornado that tears through structures of men and nature. ***Lebanon:*** The white capped mountain range of northern Palestine. ***Sirion:*** The older name for Mt. Hermon (Dt 3:9). ***Divides the flames:*** The forked strikes of lightning. ***Kadesh:*** The southern part of Palestine. ***Hinds to calve:*** The disturbance of the storms causes the deer to prematurely give birth. ***In His temple:*** All those in His heavenly dwelling give Him praise.

29:10,11 The Lord masters His forces of nature and reigns as a king over His creation. Though He reveals Himself with powerful manifestations, He is able to bring peace to those who are His. ***Peace:*** In contrast to the storm that revealed the

power of God, His power is able to bring peace to those who trust in Him. We would conclude that the psalmist wanted us to understand that peace could come only from One who was powerful enough to control all things.

Chapter 30
DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

The deliverance from death that is passionately cried out for in this psalm may have been death from sickness (Compare Is 38:18-20). The title indicates that the psalm was read at the dedication of the house of David.

30:1-3 The psalmist felt delivered from the face of death. The context of the psalm could be that after years of turmoil and possible death, he felt that this was the occasion for thanking God for his deliverance on many occasions when he could have died.

30:4-9 ***Sing to the Lord:*** This is a psalm of gratitude. The psalmist had been delivered from certain death, but lived to call on all to give praise to God for His deliverance. The psalmist lived through the night of weeping for his life, but the dawn brought joy. In his prosperity he had become arrogant and self-reliant. But he was brought low through illness in order to realize that he must stand strong in the Lord. ***Hid Your face:*** It was not that God had turned away from the psalmist. In his prosperity, the psalmist had turned from God, and thus had to realize that self-sufficiency leads one away from God. ***What profit:*** There would have been no profit to the Lord if the psalmist died. On the contrary, his life would result in continual praise of the Lord. His deliverance from certain death would manifest to all the protection that the Lord provides for His anointed.

30:10-12 The prayer for deliverance was turned to praise. In this case, the psalmist looked into the future where he would praise the Lord forever (Rv 7:9-13). ***Sackcloth:*** Clothing that was used when mourning (35:13; Gn 37:34). ***My glory:*** This was the inner soul of the individual who gives praise to the Lord (See 16:9).

Chapter 31
COMPLAINT AND PRAISE

This is a psalm of lament and praise. It is a psalm expressing trust in the Lord in times of trouble, with the subsequent results of living triumphantly. It is an emotional journey of the psalmist from the lament of tears to the triumph of joy.

31:1-8 ***Trust:*** Regardless of all trials, one must trust in the Lord. Because of faith, one takes refuge in the Lord. And since the Lord always does right, we can have confidence that He will deliver us. When we listen to the Lord, He will be our rock of stability and house of protection. The metaphors of the psalm were taken from the mountain defenses where Israel won its battles against armies who trusted in horses and chariots that were useless for battle in the mountains. Israel was so effective in winning against the attack of the enemies in the mountains that the Syrians thought they believed in a god of the hills (1 Kg 20:28). ***For Your name's sake:*** Deliverance was for the glory of God. In the historical setting, the nations would know that God was working for Israel in every battle in which they were victorious. Because they were outnumbered in many of their battles, the nations concluded that the God of Israel fought for them. ***I commit my spirit:*** Jesus quoted these words from the cross, interpreting them as an ultimate commitment of oneself into the care of God, the Father of our spirits. ***God of truth:*** Or, faithful God. ***Lying vanities:*** This was a term for the idols of false gods. Since the idolater used his gold and silver to make his idols, the meaning would be placing one's trust in the vanity of one's wealth that was manifested by the Jews through their idols of silver and gold. ***Soul in adversities:*** God acknowledged his distress. ***Feet in a large room:*** He was established in a place where there is room to move.

31:9-13 ***I am in trouble:*** The psalmist now turned in his mood to a time of anguish. ***My soul and my belly:*** Because of trouble, his inner character and body were afflicted. It was as if his life were wasting away because of the turmoil in which he was cast. The reproach of enemies and repulsion by friends had brought him to the depths of despair. As Job in the midst of his suffering, there was no one who would take his side. The psalmist was in the midst of similar suffering that Job had to endure.

31:14-18 Regardless of the suffering that he was enduring, the psalmist trusted in the Lord. He committed his existence to God, thus trusting in the providential hand of God to work in his life. ***My times:*** He felt that his destiny was in the control of God. ***Not be ashamed:*** He called on God for deliverance in order that he not be embarrassed before others because he had trusted in God. When God delivered, it would be the wicked who would be ashamed of their faith, because that in which they trusted would not deliver them from calamity. ***Let them be silent:*** This was an imprecatory request that the enemies of the psalmist meet their judgment at the hand of God.

31:19-24 The psalmist now turns to hope and triumph. This was triumph that comes as a result of trusting in God. God has stored up a wealth of goodness for those who put their trust in Him. Thus God is a refuge for all those who are suffering from the plots of those who would destroy His people. His kindness is a fortress that cannot be overcome by the foes of His people. Because God preserves the faithful, the psalmist called on His people to be of good courage. There is great reward for those who put their trust in the Lord.

Chapter 32
BLESSED FORGIVENESS & TRUST

Similar to Psalm 51, this psalm is a penitential psalm. It is a didactic psalm that was written to teach others about the rejoicing of a forgiven heart. This is a psalm that reveals how God leads one through the process of repentance of sin as a means to grow spiritually.

32:1,2 ***Transgression:*** This is the strongest Hebrew word for sin. It includes not only the meaning of breaking law, but rebellion against law. The word "sin" refers to missing the standard of moral behavior that is expected by law. Transgression, however, is treason against the one who made the law. In forgiveness for transgression, one is restored to the guidance

of God, and subsequently to obedience of the law of God. In forgiveness of sin, God covers the wayward disobedience of the sinner who violates law. ***Does not input iniquity:*** Being absolved of sin, God does not hold one accountable for what he has done. When God responds with grace, He does not take account of the sinfulness of man (See comments Rm 4:6-8). ***No guile:*** God considers the repentant transgressor as one who has turned from his rebellion and treason. Through the confession of sin, one lays himself open before God, and thus enjoys the grace of God.

32:3-5 Some have suggested that reference here was to a physical sickness that the psalmist endured. But another interpretation could be that he was so stricken with the guilt of his sin that he physically wasted away until he was driven to repentance (Compare 2 Sm 12:7-14). Such would have been the result of David's sinning, for as a man after God's own heart, he could not continue living with the knowledge that he had deliberately sinned against God (See comments ch 51). Relief came only when he acknowledged his sin. The feeling of guilt cannot be disregarded by those who seek to be godly. Since in this case pardon came with confession, then we would assume that the unpardonable sin is the sin one will not confess and from which one will not repent.

32:6,7 ***You can be found:*** God cannot be found by those who refuse to repent. It is not that God has hidden Himself from the sinner, but that we with an unrepentant heart seek to hide from God. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to endure, and thus one can always come to Him through repentance (1 Co 10:13).

32:8-11 When one returns to the Lord in full confession and repentance, he has submitted himself to God's instruction (33:18; 34:15). In rebellion, one seeks to live according to his own rules. In repentance, one seeks to return to the rule of God in his life. ***Be glad in the Lord:*** One can rejoice in the Lord because he has relinquished his will to the guidance of the Lord. If one constantly struggles against the will of the Lord, he can have little joy and peace of mind (See Ec 2:26; 8:15; 9:7; Ph 4:4).

Chapter 33
PRAISE THE CREATOR

This psalm of praise focuses on the sovereignty of God and the power of His word. God is praised because of His creation and how He has worked in His creation. The psalm concludes by focusing on the redemption that God provides for man.

33:1-9 ***You righteous:*** The psalm is directed to believers, to those who have obediently responded to God's revelation through creation and directly through His word. ***Becoming of the upright:*** Righteous people do not need to be commanded to worship God. It is a natural response for them to worship because they recognize the awesomeness of God. ***Harp ... psaltery:*** Both of these stringed instruments were introduced by David in order to bring an atmosphere of tranquility during the sacrificial events at the temple. The harp is the oldest known stringed instrument (See Gn 4:21). The psaltery, or lyre, was first mentioned in 1 Samuel 10:5. Some have assumed that it originated with the Phoenicians. ***Righteousness and judgment:*** God loves just judgment. Since He is a God of truth, then His judgment can only be just. ***Goodness of the Lord:*** When God created the world in the beginning, it was good. All that He has done throughout history, has been good. The presence of evil in the world, therefore, is the result of the work of Satan. ***By the word of the Lord:*** God's spoken word resulted in the creation of the universe. Thus the creation was spoken into existence (Compare Cl 1:16; Hb 1:3). ***Waters:*** God originally created seas by the dividing of the waters from the land. Waters were gathered above the firmament in the heavens and in underground reservoirs (See comments Gn 1:9,10). ***He spoke:*** God is to be reverenced and feared for His power because it was by His spoken word that He created all things.

33:10-17 ***Nations to nought:*** The psalmist introduced this next section of the psalm by contrasting the power of God with the power of the nations. The governments of the world may propose plans, but it is God who is running the show. ***Nation whose God is the Lord:*** When a nation gives up on God, it gives up God's moral standard for society. The nation that has given up on God's moral standards, therefore, has turned in the direction of doom, for it is not within man to determine his own moral standards. ***He has chosen:*** As it was with the nation of Israel, so it is with the church. God chose the nation of Israel, and thus everyone who was physically born into the nation became a chosen person of God. God chose the church for eternal dwelling (See Ep 1). Everyone who is spiritually born into the church by obedience to the gospel, becomes a member of the chosen body. People were not individually chosen by God to become Israelites. Neither are they individually chosen to become a part of the church. ***Not saved by a mighty army:*** No great army has been able to stop the disappearance of any nation of history. The great Roman army preserved Rome for five centuries, but eventually Rome fell. Only God transitions through time, and thus preserves those who put their trust in Him. ***Horse:*** Though great in strength, there is a limit to what a great horse can do to provide safety in battle.

33:18-22 ***Eye of the Lord:*** God has no eye, but the metaphor here is significant in reference to His relationship with those who have put their trust in Him. He always "sees" the needs of those who obey Him. He delivers them from death and preserves them through times of drought. He is thus our help in times of need and our shield in times of assault by the wicked. ***Because ... according:*** There are conditions for the Lord to work in our lives. The conditions are our trust in Him and our faith in the hope that He has set before us (See Rm 8:24,25; Hb 6:17-20).

Chapter 34
THE PROVIDER & DELIVERER

This is a psalm of the deliverance of David when he changed his behavior before Abimeleck in order to spare his own life (1 Sm 21:10-15).

34:1-6 ***At all times:*** See 1 Th 5:17. Our worship of God is not confined to a specific time of worship. No one who has given himself to the Lord confines his praise of the Lord

to certain times or places. "At all times" assumes that in every place one gives praise to God (See comments Rm 12:1,2). ***Delivered me from all my fears:*** The fear of the Lord delivers us from the fear of man. ***Radiant:*** The result of keeping one's face toward the Lord is that the radiance of the Lord flows from one's heart and is perceived in one's life (Compare Js 1:1-3).

34:7-10 ***The angel of the Lord:*** The word "angel" that is here preceded by the article "the" indicates that this was not just any angel. This was the Angel of God's presence who is one with God (See 35:5,6; Gn 16:7,13; Jg 13:21,22; Hs 12:4,5). We would consider this Angel the preincarnate Christ who existed as one with the triune God. We would assume that the preincarnate Christ would work in some realm before coming into the world in the form of man. In this mention of Him, He worked to protect the righteous and deliver them from calamity. ***No lack:*** See comments Mt 6:25-34.

34:11-14 ***I will teach you:*** God teaches through the instruction of His word (See 2 Tm 2:15). What He teaches are moral principles by which one can cohabit with others in society. ***Fear of the Lord:*** This would be obedience to the Lord as a result of recognizing His awesomeness. In order to be God's son, one must have a right attitude toward God that results in a life-style of obedience to His will. If one would see good in his life, then he must submit to the will of the Lord. The psalmist thus gives moral principles by which one should live. One principle deals with what comes from one's mouth, and the other concerning how he behaves. When one seeks peace with his fellow man, he will be cautious about what he says and how he behaves.

34:15-22 The contrast of the individuals explained in verses 15 & 16 emphasizes the willingness of God to protect and provide for those who seek peace with man as a result of their desire to do God's will. ***The Lord ... saves:*** This is not a context of salvation from sin. Reference is to salvation from danger and death. In the case of David, God delivered David out of numerous perils in his life. He was delivered because he had given himself to the Lord. His deliverance, therefore, was a testimony of God's presence and work in his life. ***Many ... afflictions***: Simply because one is a child of God does not mean that he will escape hardships in this life. However, knowing that God will not allow His children to be tempted beyond what they are able to endure encourages them to remain true to their faith (See 1 Co 10:13). For this reason, Christians can rejoice in their trials (Js 1:2,3). ***His bones:*** Bones are the structural framework of the body, and thus God metaphorically provides structure to the life of the righteous. Though the wicked will reap the reward of their evil, God will preserve those who are His. ***Redeems:*** The Lord continues to deliver His people in order that they not become desolate. In a spiritual sense, the metaphor would apply to the continual cleansing of the sins of the righteous in order that they stand pure before God (See comments 1 Jn 1:7).

Chapter 35
PLEA FOR RESCUE

This is an imprecatory psalm wherein the psalmist cried out to the Lord for judgment to come on his enemies because they had treacherously sought to destroy him. It is not that the psalmist asked God to aid him in order that he might personally bring evil upon his enemies. He asked God to avenge him by destroying his enemies (Dt 32:35; Rm 12:19).

35:1-10 ***Strive with me:*** The psalmist sought vindication. In strife with his enemies he took his case before the Lord and asked the Lord to go to battle for him. He desired that the Lord step in and defend all those who had taken their stand against him. We must keep in mind that an imprecatory psalm was based on the fact that an attack against God's anointed king was an attack on God and His people. The imprecatory demand of the psalmist was not a call for a personal vendetta. ***Salvation:*** This is not in a redemptive context. Reference is to deliverance from death (3:8). The imagery of the battle is seated in the desire of the psalmist to be used as God's instrument to defeat His enemies. Thus the psalmist is calling on God to work through him in order to confuse and scatter his enemies. The basis for the plea of David was that since he was the anointed of God, his enemies were actually fighting against God. ***Destruction ... unawares:*** As a hunter, Saul had planned traps for David. But David asked that Saul be caught in his own traps.

35:11-18 ***I humbled my soul:*** No greater exhortation could be made to God's leaders. David was slanderously attacked by Saul and his band of deceived companions. But David responded with a humble heart, praying with fasting for those who slandered him. Godly leaders do not unreasonably react to the attacks of their enemies, but go to God in prayer. ***My prayer returned:*** The prayers of David concerning his adversaries were not answered at this time. His enemies were relentless in pursuing him. Thus the benefit of the prayers came back on David, for they manifested his righteousness, as well as the fulfillment of his responsibility to pray for one's enemies. ***In my adversity they rejoiced:*** David received no sympathy from his adversaries. They rejoiced in his calamity. Though stricken with grief because of the relentless attack of those who were against him, David remained faithful to his calling as the anointed of God. He did not return the slander. He simply maintained his destiny as God's man to stand as the anointed of God in the face of great opposition, assuming that with his anointing to be king came also the attack of envious people. ***Gnashed on me:*** This was an expression of rage, anger and hatred (37:12; 112:10; Jb 16:9). When used in the New Testament, reference was to agony that resulted from extreme disappointment (Mt 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

35:19-28 ***Wink with the eye:*** In their wicked behavior to persecute him, David did not want his enemies to have the satisfaction of their own self-approval. The enemies crafted plots against those who wanted to live in peace. They had boasted with opened mouths that they had seen the conquest of David. ***Let them be ashamed:*** In the midst of those who shouted for victory over David, David pleaded that the Lord come to his defense to work through him for the downfall of his enemies. By doing this, all would see that God worked for David, and thus the enemies would become ashamed of their attacks against God's anointed. When we submit to God, He gives us the victory.

Chapter 36
WICKED MEN & LOVING GOD

This is a psalm of wisdom. It contrasts the life of the wicked with the life of those who live after the wisdom of God.

36:1-4 ***Oracle:*** This term was used to refer to a prophetic statement. The word was personified by the psalmist to make a pronouncement concerning the wicked. In this context, the wicked would be the person who acknowledged the existence of God, but devised iniquity, deceit and mischief. This is the person who is totally consumed with his own life. He uses others for his own means. He abhors what is right. ***Until his iniquity is found:*** The great deception of the wicked is that they think they will not be found out. Their deceiving of others is based on their own belief that others will not discover their deception. They are thus self-deceived. The wicked have thus forsaken wisdom and followed a course of life in which they have their own delight.

36:5-9 ***You preserve man and beast:*** Contrary to the lack of wisdom on the part of the self-serving wicked man, the righteous enjoy the preservation of a merciful God who seeks to care for those who love Him (See 91:4). Those who wisely put their trust in the Lord will enjoy the blessings that come forth from God.

36:10-12 The psalm concludes with a request by the psalmist that God preserve him from the insolent because he put his trust in God. The prayer is that the will of the wicked not overcome those who have wisely trusted in God.

Chapter 37
SECURITY & INSECURITY

This is a wisdom psalm that deals with the prosperity of the wicked. This psalm exhorts the righteous not to fret over the prosperity of the wicked, since such prosperity is only temporary.

37:1-11 The righteous should not fret over the inequities of life, but seek for the contentment that is gained through one's commitment to God. Though life is filled with inequities in reference to wealth, one must be content with the fact that wealth does not determine whether one is in favor with God. Thus one's envy of the wealth of the wicked is a useless expense of one's thinking. ***Dwell ... fed:*** As long as one has food and shelter, then he must be content to live in righteousness before God (Jn 14:13; 15:7; Ph 4:19). ***Wait patiently for Him:*** Worry, envy and impatience are tools of the devil to ensnare the righteous. The righteous must keep in mind that the wealth of the wicked is only temporary in the sense that in death the wicked will lose all their wealth. Therefore, one should not sacrifice his contentment by envying those things that will eventually pass away, both at the time of death and at the end of the world (See comments 2 Pt 3:10-16).

37:12-22 In the historical context, David reassured the righteous that the plots of evil men will come to an end. The Lord laughs at the wicked in the sense that He knows that their end will come. The weapons of destruction that were aimed against the righteous will destroy those who sought to inflict pain on the righteous. In the end, the little that the righteous have will outlast the wealth of the wicked. This will come about because God supports the righteous, but works against the wicked. What is important, therefore, is one's obedient relationship with God. The evidence of one's obedience should not be based on whether he is blessed with wealth, or lives in poverty.

37:23-31 The righteous must be assured that God is working for them. ***The steps of a good man:*** The behavior of the righteous is ordered by God in that the righteous have voluntarily submitted to the will of God. All things will work together for good for those who put their trust in the Lord (Rm 8:28). ***The law of his God is in his heart:*** This would be the secret for the blessings that come from the Lord. The character of the righteous is defined by his obedience to the law of God. In his obedience, God goes to work for him. His spiritual legacy, therefore, will be preserved by his descendants.

37:32-40 This section of the psalm concludes the contrast between the righteous and wicked. The wicked oppress the righteous, but the Lord delivers those who are His. By their knowledge of His deliverance, the righteous are encouraged to be patient and to wait on the Lord. They will eventually see the deliverance of God from their unjust treatment by the wicked. The Lord is the salvation of the righteous, their strength in times of trial, and their help and deliverance because they have put their trust in Him. If the righteous put their trust in the Lord, ignore the position and prosperity of the wicked, then they will gain contentment and the secret to a happy life. True happiness does not follow wealth, but is discovered in the spirit of one who does not allow the environment in which he lives to determine his attitude or character.

Chapter 38
TIMES OF REMORSE

This is a penitential psalm (Compare 6; 32). The psalm, which is attributed to David, is a psalm of great remorse. The psalmist was burdened with guilt for his sin. The psalm is traditionally believed to have been written by David after his sin with Bathsheba. The remorse that is expressed in the psalm was so great that the psalmist was suffering from some physical illness, and thus cried out to God in repentance.

38:1-8 God generally does not inflict sickness for sin (See Jb 2:7-10). However, on some occasions He has (See 1 Ch 11:30; Js 5:15). In the context of this psalm, the psalmist felt that God had chastised him with sickness because of his sin. At least in the despair of his illness, his heart was turned to focus on his sin. ***Iniquities are overwhelming:*** If one is sincere in pleasing God, then when he does sin his sin bears heavily on his conscience. The psalmist was thus in agony over his sin. His sin had brought great turmoil in his heart, and thus being knowledgeable of his sin, he could have no peace of mind.

38:9-14 The sin of his life had left him vulnerable. Friends and family had forsaken him, which left him vulnerable to the attack of his enemies. He was as one who could not hear or speak out for himself.

38:15-22 ***I am ready to fall:*** When men sink low into the guilt of sin that produces repentance, then it is a time when God goes to work. Only when we mourn over our sins can

God redeem us from our despair (See comments Mt 5:1-12). God goes to work when men confess their sin. Though the psalmist had sunk deep into despair because of the guilt of his sin, he had not forgotten where to go to find forgiveness and peace of mind. He had not turned from God, and thus deep in the despair of the guilt for his sin, he turned to God.

Chapter 39
VANITY OF LIFE

In this sequel to the preceding psalm, the psalmist views sin from the perspective of the brevity of human life. The psalm is penitential, but the penitence is not expressed in the extremity of Psalm 38.

39:1-6 ***Muzzle:*** The psalmist felt that his emotions had to be restrained, lest he speak in complaint against the Lord for his brevity of life. It seems that the psalmist relinquished himself to the Lord because life was so short that it should not be consumed with complaint. ***Riches:*** Because life is so short, there is folly in trying to amass riches. For this reason, the wise see past the temporary futility of riches in order to focus on those things that go beyond life. By the time one realizes the futility of a wasted life in seeking riches, it is often too late to repent and turn to God.

39:7-13 The psalmist's hope was in the Lord's deliverance from his sin. In deliverance from sin, the psalmist saw healing from his sickness. ***Give ear to my cry:*** The psalmist's petition was that the Lord hear the remorse of his heart because of his transgression in order that he be delivered from his illness. ***Stranger ... sojourner:*** This was one who had the benefits of the land, but was only passing through (See Ex 22:21). Thus the psalmist was only passing through life, benefiting from what God had prepared in the world for the habitation of man. In the brevity of one's life on earth, he enjoyed the creation that was owned by God. Before passing from life, the psalmist wanted to be forgiven of his sin, and thus healed of his physical illness before he died.

Chapter 40
SACRIFICE FOR HELP

This psalm may be a combination of two different psalms. Verses 12-17 are similar to Psalm 70. It is a psalm where the psalmist gives a sacrifice of praise, and then a prayer for help.

40:1-5 ***I waited patiently:*** David had to wait for his answer from the Lord. Simply because a prayer is uttered, does not mean that God must immediately respond. ***Pit ... clay ... rock:*** When one waits for God's answer to prayer, through faith he will be lifted from the quagmire of despondency and placed on a solid foundation. Deliverance from the turmoil of life calls for a new song of joy because of answered prayer. ***Wonderful works:*** Recognizing answered prayer is joy to the believer. Once one is perceptive of the work of God in his life, he cannot count the number of times the Lord has come to his aid. Such is evidence that no person can possibly count how many times God has come to the aid of His people. We cannot count the number of times simply because we are not always perceptive to all the times when He has aided us.

40:6-12 ***Did not desire sacrifice and offering:*** It was not that God set aside the law for sacrifices and offerings. The giving of such manifested one's desire to worship. What God did not accept were sacrifices and offerings that were legalistic, and were given without a sincere heart (See Is 1:11-15; Mc 6:6-8). God does not accept ritualistic worship. Verses 6-8 are also quoted in Hebrews 10:5-7 in reference to the Messiah, thus the secondary fulfillment of these words would apply to Jesus. ***I delight to do Your will:*** God's commandments are not a burden to those who love the Lord (1 Jn 5:3). They are not a burden because obedience is the natural result of one's recognition of God's love. The righteous, therefore, consider it a great joy to proclaim the grace and mercy of God (See 2 Co 4:15).

40:13-17 These verses are almost parallel to Psalm 70. ***Help me:*** David cried out for deliverance from those who sought to destroy him. He not only cried out for himself, but asked the Lord to deliver all those who cry out for deliverance from their oppressors. He asked that desolation be the reward of those who scorn the righteous.

Chapter 41
COMPLAINTS AGAINST ENEMIES

There is no rhythm of thought in this psalm. It focuses on many subjects, and thus is written as a proverbial psalm. The primary focus of the psalm is lament, but it deals with a variety of subjects that touched the life of the psalmist. Throughout the psalm, the psalmist in sickness complains of being oppressed by his enemies and his false friends.

41:1-3 ***The poor:*** In these verses David possibly reflected on the benefits he received from the Lord as a result of his care for the unfortunate. He received deliverance, blessing, strength and mercy from the Lord because he had shown the same to the poor (Compare Lv 19:9,10; 23:22; Dt 24:19). ***Sustain him on his bed:*** He had faith that the Lord would bring health to him while he was on his sickbed.

41:4-9 As David had shown mercy to others, the Lord showed mercy to him. ***When will he die:*** David's enemies rejoiced over his sickness, thinking that he would be taken away by death. They plotted evil against him while he was in sickness. ***Familiar friend:*** In the historical context of the psalm this could have been Ahithophel (2 Sm 15:12,31). Ahithophel betrayed David, as Jesus was betrayed by Judas (Jn 13:18).

41:10-13 ***I may repay them:*** If the historical context of this psalm was the insurrection of Absalom, then as a restored king, David felt that it was his duty to render justice to those who had betrayed him. ***Blessed is the Lord:*** This doxology closes the first book of psalms. ***Everlasting:*** Since God is eternal, His blessing is without beginning and ending. His existence is certain and will not go away simply because men refuse to have Him in their minds.

Book II
(42:1 – 72:20)

The word *Yahweh* ("the Lord") was used primarily in Book I in reference to Deity. In Book II the word *Elohim* (God) is the primary reference to Deity. For this reason, Book II is referred to as the Elohistic Psalms.

Chapter 42
SEEKING GOD IN EXILE

Psalms 42 & 43 were probably one psalm originally. Both are psalms of lament. In the titles, reference is made to Korah, from whom came the temple servants (See 1 Ch 9:19; 26:1,19), and Heman, who was a descendant of the temple singers who were originally organized by David (1 Ch 15:17; 16:41,42; 25:4,5). Psalm 42 is the plea of a believer in the midst of unbelievers. The psalmist seems to be in exile among those who have no faith in the God of Israel. While in exile, he recalls the times when he was able to go unto the house of God with all those who worshiped.

42:1-5 ***Pants after the water:*** This craving for communion with God should define the spiritual character of God's people (See comments Rm 12:1,2). ***The living God:*** This is the contrast between the true God and the pagan idols of man that were represented by carvings in wood and stone, or the forming of an image out of silver or gold. The living God of heaven is active in the lives of men. Pagan gods are only the result of the active imagination of men. ***I remember:*** The psalmist gives no information as to why he was in exile. But his remembrance of former times when he accompanied the worshipers of God to the place of the ark of God, brought back cherished memories of joy. ***Help of His countenance:*** David was confident that his predicament would change once God turned His face toward his needs.

42:6-11 ***Mount Mizar:*** This mount is in the northern part of Palestine, within sight of Mt. Hermon. It was to this region that David fled during the insurrection of his son, Absalom. ***Deep calls to deep:*** The psalmist's life was as one flood coming after another. He was being overcome with the torrents of those who opposed him. ***Still praise Him:*** Regardless of the turmoil that was in the life of David, he continued to put his trust in God. The calamity that had befallen him never became an occasion for him to complain against God. He maintained his hope even during one of the most trying times of his life, the times during the betrayal and insurrection of his son, Absalom.

Chapter 43
PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE

This psalm continues the lament of David over unjust treatment. He seeks to be delivered from the unjust judgment of men.

43:1-5 ***Plead my cause:*** The psalmist asked for vindication. ***Deceitful and unjust man:*** This was the general character of the people who were against the psalmist, not a particular person. ***Light ... truth:*** Those who would seek to be led by God must continually look toward His guidance and the truth of His word. ***Holy hill:*** Possibly the mountain where the tabernacle was located in Jerusalem. ***Tabernacle:*** The dwelling place of God was represented by the tabernacle. It was a symbol of His presence in Israel. ***Why ... in despair:*** Since the psalmist had just reviewed his hope in God, he concluded by questioning why he was in despair. It was a time to count it all joy in his time of trial (Js 1:2,3). If one would live a godly life, he must expect persecution (2 Tm 3:12).

Chapter 44
PAST DELIVERANCES & PRESENT TROUBLES

The historical setting of this psalm was a time of national despair. Though the captivity that is referred to in verse 11 could be understood to be the Babylonian captivity, it could also refer to a time when Israel was subdued by the nations around her, which national subjections took place before the final fall of Judah in 586 B.C. On the other hand, there are indications in the psalm that the immediate historical context is to a specific time in their history when Israel suffered a defeat by her enemies.

44:1-3 The psalmist recalled the time of their obedience when God worked to deliver the nations of the land into their hand. Israel's conquest of Palestine was not by military skill. It was the result of God working with the Israelite army to empower each soldier to rid the land of the Canaanites.

44:4-8 ***Jacob:*** Reference was to the nation of Israel. The psalmist pleaded that Israel again be delivered from her enemies by the strong arm of God working through them. If God would remember His people, then they would again humble their enemies in order to boast that God worked for them.

44:9-16 ***You have cast off:*** This was not without reason. God cast them off because they had cast off God. This was the reality of their situation at the time the psalmist wrote. At a time when they believed in Him alone, God had worked through them to cast the enemies of Israel out of the land of Palestine. But at this time in their history they had put their trust in false gods, and thus God had terminated His work through them in order to lead them to be victorious over their enemies. ***Taunt:*** They were scorned by the nations around them. ***Byword:*** See Dt 28:37. ***A scorn and a derision:*** Because they forsook their God, the nations around them who had believed that their God brought them into possession of the land, now mocked them and their God. Since Israel had broken the conditions of God's covenant, God had broken Himself off from them. He left them as sheep for slaughter. ***Dishonor:*** They had brought disgrace on themselves and God because of their disobedience.

44:17-22 ***We have not forgotten You:*** It may have been that they had just suffered a major defeat in battle. The psalmist expressed his personal faith on behalf of the nation, and thus recalled that the nation sought to keep the covenant that God had established with them at Mt. Sinai. His faithfulness was the reason for his calling on God to deliver the nation from those who had defeated them. ***Search this out:*** As Job, the psalmist knew that God knew their hearts. He called on God to deliver them according to their commitment to the covenant that God had made with the nation.

44:23-26 ***Awake ... arise:*** The psalmist here spoke of God as a man who should awake and arise on behalf of His people. ***Hide ... forget:*** When in times of great despair, the psalmist felt that God had forsaken them to the will of their enemies. Thus the call on God to arise and remember was a call that God take action and deliver them from their enemies.

Chapter 45
CELEBRATING THE KING'S MARRIAGE

Hebrews 1:8,9 refers to this psalm in reference to the Mes-

siah. There is an immediate historical application of the message of this psalm, which is the marriage of the king. But because the writer of Hebrews refers to it in a Messianic context, there is a secondary application to the Messiah.

45:1-9 The immediate historical context of this psalm is to the king and his marriage. It is a praise of the grandeur of the king and his work among the people. If we understand that this glorious description of an earthly king is a metaphor of King Jesus, then we can appreciate the extent to which the psalmist goes in describing the king. ***Your throne ... forever and ever:*** This statement would take us to the center of authority of the throne of David and the succeeding kings of Israel that would come from the lineage of David. Since the throne was forever, but each earthly king only reigns temporary, then we would conclude that the authority of the throne rested in God, not man. The use of the word "forever" does not necessarily refer to time, but to certainty. It was a throne (authority) that permeated time, for its authority originated with God, not man. Verses 6,7 were quoted by the Hebrew writer in order to apply this message to the reign of Jesus (Hb 1:8,9). ***Anointed:*** This is the word from which the noun "Messiah" is derived. The Greek equivalent is the noun "Christ." ***Worship him:*** In the immediate context we would conclude that the queen would reverence the king. But the use of the word "worship" would lead us to conclude that the secondary application is in the mind of the psalmist. It is the church that gives glory to King Jesus. ***Gold of Ophir:*** See 1 Kg 9:26-28; 22:48.

45:10-17 Verses 10-15 are a description of the bride of the king. The bride of the king is an illustration of the church. We would conclude that the description here is far beyond the queen of an earthly king, and thus a description of the glory of the church as the bride of Christ. Verses 16,17 conclude with a description of the blessedness of the union between the king and the queen. The glorious union produces a posterity that generates praise from the people. In this case, the posterity of the king would continue to reign as kings, which reign of kings would end in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 46
GOD IS OUR REFUGE

Psalms 46-48 focus on the strength of God to aid His people. In view of 2 Peter 3, the psalm could be apocalyptic in reference to God's sovereignty over all things that will eventually lead to the destruction of the present existing worlds. The psalmist seeks to encourage the righteous by revealing to them the awesome power of God to control and destroy all that exists.

46:1-11 ***Though the earth is removed:*** The courage of God's people rests in the fact that God has control over all things (See comments Hb 1:3). Regardless of immediate disasters, or the end-of-time destruction of the present world (2 Pt 3:10-13), God is in control of all things. ***In the midst of her:*** God is omnipresent. He is always present with His creation. Thus His people must be assured that He is always present with them for their help. ***Makes wars to cease:*** Reference here could be to the Messianic age (See Is 2:2-4; Hs 2:18; Mc 4:1-3). War ceases among those who are His people. Though carnal warfare continues in the environment of the saints, war among the saints terminates. However, at the end of time, war will cease among all men, for the wicked will be taken away from the righteous.

Chapter 47
THE SOVEREIGN GOD OF ALL THINGS

The theme of this second psalm of the trilogy of praise to God is the sovereignty of God. It is a psalm that calls on the people of the world to give praise to God for He is king of all things. It concludes with a description of the awesomeness of God in all His glory.

47:1-4 All people of the world are called together to praise the awesome God who subdues the earth. ***King over all the earth:*** Though God reigns from a heavenly realm, He is king of the earth. God does not have to set foot on this earth in order to reign over the earth. God, the Father, now reigns without being on this earth (44:4; 48:2; 74:12; 1 Sm 12:12; Is 41:21). Jesus has now assumed this reign. He has now ascended to the throne in heaven and reigns over all things (Dn 7:13,14; Ep 1:20-24; Ph 2:5-11). If we say that Jesus must be on earth in order to reign over the earth, then we have assumed that God, the Father, during the Old Testament era, was not reigning over all the earth. Jesus is now reigning over all the earth as the Father reigned over all the earth before the ascension of Jesus (Mt 28:18).

47:5-9 ***Sing praises:*** This is the natural response to those who recognize that God is the king of all things. ***God reigns:*** At the time this psalm was written, God was reigning over all things. However, He was not reigning on earth. Therefore, God can reign without being on earth. He reigns through the hearts of those who have given themselves to Him. This is how Jesus is now reigning over the obedient (See Lk 17:20,21; see comments Rm 5:17). But as the Father's reign extended beyond the nation of Israel, so the kingdom of Jesus extends beyond the church. Jesus is head of all things for the sake of the church (Ep 1:20-24). All the church is within the kingdom reign of Jesus, but not all who are under the kingdom reign of Jesus are in the church (See 1 Pt 3:22). Jesus does not have to be on earth in order to reign over earth. This psalm explains a very important aspect of the reign of Jesus. Jesus is now King of kings and Lord of lords, though not all kings and lords of this world are in the church (1 Tm 6:15).

Chapter 48
THE GLORY OF ZION

This psalm seems to have a historical setting that pictured a future Messianic fulfillment. The immediate historical setting could be the deliverance of Jerusalem from the attack of Sennacherib who was king of the Assyrians (2 Kg 18; 19; Is 36; 37). The secondary application, however, would be the future Messianic kingdom (See Hb 12:18-24).

48:1-8 ***City of our God:*** This would be Jerusalem, the city that was chosen by David and eventually became the capital of the southern kingdom, Judah. ***Palaces for a refuge:*** The historical setting may be that there was an attack against the city, but the attackers were driven away in fear (See 2 Kg

19:35,36). ***Trading ships:*** See 1 Kg 22:48; Jh 1:3-16.

48:9-14 God's protection during times of siege encourages our praise of Him. Through His mercy He delivers us from our adversaries. For this reason, we should rejoice always in His name (Ph 4:4). ***Tell it:*** The deliverance of Jerusalem from her attackers was a message that should be told to everyone. It should be told because God was the one who delivered the city. In reference to the Zion of God today, the church, it should be told to all that God has delivered His people by the cross of Jesus. Our deliverance from sin by the gospel of Jesus is our message to the nations that God is merciful and willing to extend grace to all.

Chapter 49
THE VANITY OF WEALTH

This psalm deals with a problem that made Job question God while he was enduring his calamity. He wondered why the wicked prospered, but at the same time the righteous suffered in their poverty (Compare chs 37 & 73). The answer to the question is that the wealth of the rich is only temporary. Though there may be inequalities in this life, death will take away the riches of the wealthy. Thus the final answer to the question lies in the fact that in death the righteous poor receive their riches, but the rich are stripped of theirs. As the rich become more entangled in their wealth in this life, they become like beasts who are claimed by death and are no more (See comments Lk 12:16-21).

49:1-4 ***Wisdom ... understanding:*** The psalmist called on the readers to listen to wisdom and consider understanding from the eternal viewpoint of God. ***Proverb:*** What is revealed here is a wise saying to be understood. ***Dark saying:*** This was a riddle or parable of some profound thought. What was revealed in the psalm was the folly of the rich who trusted in their wealth.

49:5-12 ***Trust in their wealth and boast:*** This is the folly of the rich. No amount of riches can be given to God to redeem one from his predicament of sin. No money can be paid for the redemption of one's dead brother. The folly in thinking such is that one would be attempting to buy God's favor with the riches of this world. The foolishness of such beliefs is that God can create His own gold and silver. ***Their soul is costly:*** Nothing short of the precious blood of Jesus, the Son of God, can pay the price of redemption for the soul of man (See 1 Pt 1:17-21). ***Leave their wealth:*** No one takes any wealth with him into the grave. All is left. That for which a person has labored all his life is left behind and often squandered by those who did not work for it (See Ec 2:18,19). The psalmist's proverb was not to the wealthy, but to the poor who would envy the state and status of the wealthy in this world. Their envy would be folly if based on the belief that wealth in any way gave one a spiritual advantage in reference to redemption.

49:13-15 ***Their way is their folly:*** It would be well for the poor to always remember this truth. Those who consume themselves, both with acquiring and consuming the wealth of the world, often lose their focus on that which permeates death. ***Dominion over them in the morning:*** In this statement there is the reality of a bodily resurrection. And in the resurrection from the dead, the righteous will be raised to inherit the riches of eternity, whereas those who were wealthy on earth will be raised for destruction (See comments Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9).

49:16-20 ***Do not be afraid when one is made rich:*** The folly of the poor would be to conclude that the rich are blessed by God. Satan would bless one with material things in order to keep him satisfied with that which will pass away. We assume that riches are always the blessing of God. But we must also assume that Satan would work to make one wealthy in order to keep him away from God. Though wealth in this world may offer temporary pleasures and happiness in this life, we must never forget that all the world offers in riches will be taken away in death. Wealth is never more valuable than piety, and in most cases works against the development of piety. ***Carry nothing away:*** The rich will not take any riches to the grave. ***Will not descend:*** Sheol was considered down, and thus when one died he went down into Sheol, into which place the rich will take nothing.

Chapter 50
THE JUDGE OF ALL MEN

The legalistic Israelite felt that he could, in his insincerity, worship God according to the ritual of sacrifices. The psalmist in this psalm affirms that insincere ceremonies cannot take the place of obedient faith. Out of obedient faith comes praise and thanksgiving. The problem with a legal offering of sacrifices is that the offerings can be made without praise and thanksgiving. The sin of the legalist is in his keeping of law while forgetting to give glory to God with his heart. He keeps the ceremony of the law, but forgets the spirit of the law.

50:1-6 ***Called the earth:*** This psalm begins with a call of God to judge all His people of all the world (Compare Gn 6:11; 9:13; Dt 32:1). ***Covenant with Me:*** These are those who must submit to the judgment of God. ***His righteousness:*** This is the foundation upon which God has a right to judge His people. In many contexts of the psalms, "righteousness" can be translated justice, for it is the same word as "justice" or "just." Because God is the only just one, He only has a right to call all into a final judgment.

50:7-15 Israel was faithful in legally performing the sacrifices of the law. This was not God's complaint against them. Neither was God looking to be fed as a man with the meat of the animals of the world, for all the world belonged to Him. What Israel was not offering was obedience (keeping their vows) and thanksgiving in prayer that brought Him glory. His goodness toward them had not motivated thanksgiving (See 2 Co 4:15; compare Mk 12:33,34). They were only performing the rituals of the law.

50:16-23 ***To declare my statutes:*** The wicked among Israel declared (proclaimed) the statutes of God by legally offering the sacrifices. However, they did not give glory to God in their hearts or offer thanksgiving for His goodness. ***Consented with him:*** They not only did wrong, the wicked also consented to the wrong of others (Rm 1:32). They kept silent when wrong was done, and thus revealed their own wickedness through their consent. ***Now consider:*** There was still time to repent. God offered them an opportunity to change (At

17:30,31; 2 Pt 3:9; Rv 2:5). However, after the opportunity was given, it was time for judgment. God stands just because He gives people an opportunity to repent.

Chapter 51
PRAYER FOR PARDON

This most intense of all the penitential psalms is a prayer for forgiveness and a confession that comes forth from the heart of a truly repentant person. The psalmist confessed his sin, and then pleaded for forgiveness. His prayer was rewarded because of his humble spirit. The historical background was the sin of David in his sinful relationship with Bathsheba. Because of his sin with Bathsheba after living a conscientious obedient life, David came to the realization that sin can overcome even the most dedicated.

51:1-4 ***Have mercy:*** This is the only recourse of man in reference to his sin. No man can legally justify himself by obedience to law or the offering of good works. One can only plead for mercy and grace before the One against whom we have sinned. ***Blot out:*** See Is 43:25; Jr 18:23. ***Against You:*** Others had suffered from the consequences of David's sin. Uriah was dead. Bathsheba was a grieving widow. But David realized that his sin was against God, for God only could grant forgiveness.

51:5-9 ***Brought forth in iniquity:*** It was not that David was born a sinner. The passage is not speaking of the nature of David at the time of his birth, but the situation surrounding his conception and birth. Thus sin surrounded David's beginning, and sin was the environment into which he was born. But specifically, the sin refers to the mother, not to the one who was born. It is important to first understand that verse 5 is a Hebrew parallelism. In this style of poetry, two lines of poetry express the same thought in two different lines but with different words and phrases. The context is that David was talking about his conception, not his birth. And in discussing his conception, he was talking about the situation of his mother at the time of his conception. If the sin about which he was talking was inherited, therefore, this verse would not apply because the verse is discussing the situation of someone other than the one who is conceived. The context is that David is talking about the sin of his mother, who was a sinner as all men are sinners (Rm 3:23). Thus the two lines of the parallelism explain one another. Notice what David is saying in order to make this emphasis: Line 1: *I was brought forth in iniquity.* Line 2: In sin my mother conceived me. "Brought forth" of line 1 is explained in line 2 as "conceived." Therefore, conception is under discussion, not birth. "In iniquity" of line 1 is explained as "in sin" in line 2. "My mother" of line 2 refers us to whose sin is under discussion in line 1. Thus, the "iniquity" of line 1 would refer to David's mother. ***Purge me with hyssop:*** This was a sprig of a desert bush that was used to sprinkle blood on a leper by the priest to signify his cleansing (Lv 14:4; compare Hb 9:13,14; 1 Jn 1:7). ***Wash me:*** The Hebrew word for "wash" is the word that was used by those who beat clothes on a solid surface in order to dislodge grime. We often must reap what we sow in order to be brought to repentance. ***Snow:*** See Is 1:18. ***Bones ... broken:*** The imagery here was total submission to allow God to completely humble the psalmist because of his sin. Only from total submission through confession can one be restored to a right relationship with God.

5:10-13 ***Clean heart ... right spirit:*** This would be the result of forgiveness that resulted from sincere repentance. ***Holy Spirit:*** See Is 63:10,11. ***Joy:*** The result of forgiveness was that David experienced again the inner joy of God's grace. It was that joy that brought him peace of mind. ***I will teach:*** Experiencing God's grace moves one to tell others how God has extended his grace toward us (2 Co 4:15). When we understand how far we were away from God in sin, then we understand the magnitude of God's grace to go and get us in order to bring us near to Him.

51:14-19 If one does not comprehend the blessedness of his own salvation, he will not be motivated to share it with others. Indifference to what God has done for us, kills our desire to share the praises of God with others. ***Not desire sacrifice:*** Perfect obedience to law would not cover the sin of David. What God desired was a broken spirit that was manifested through repentance. The broken spirit would offer the sacrifices, but sacrifices without a broken spirit are useless. Sacrifices are accepted when offered by sincere hearts.

Chapter 52
THE VANITY OF BOASTING

This psalm is a contrast between the righteous and wicked, revealing the frustration the righteous have toward the wicked and their ungodly ways (See ch 1).

52:1-5 ***O mighty man:*** The psalmist challenged the arrogant wicked tyrant who boasted in his wickedness. ***Destroy you forever:*** The destruction of the wicked is certain (See comments 2 Th 1:6-9). Because he has proved in life that he is not fit for eternal dwelling, his destruction is certain.

52:6-9 ***See and fear:*** When the righteous see how God has destroyed the wicked out of the land of the living, they will fear lest they turn from the will of God. The righteous will taunt the wicked because of the judgment of God. They will declare the goodness of God because He has rendered judgment on the wicked.

Chapter 53
FOLLY OF THE WICKED

This psalm is parallel to Psalm 14 (See comments). In this psalm the word *Yahweh* (God) is used instead of *Elohim* (Lord), which word is used in Psalm 14 in reference to Deity.

53:1-6 The historical background of this psalm seems to have been an event when the enemies of God's people had launched an attack against them. However, because God came to the rescue of His people, they were at the time given a great victory over their enemies. God went to war with Israel because He found no good in Israel's enemies. They were all filled with evil intentions, and thus did not respect God because they had launched an attack against His people. The foolishness of the wicked was revealed in the fact that they dared to attack God's people. When one either persecutes or attacks God's people, he is persecuting or attacking God (See comments At 9:4).

Chapter 54
PLEA FOR DEFENSE

This is a psalm of lament. The historical background was possibly the betrayal of David by the men of Ziph (See 1 Sm 23:19-26; 26:1-4).

54:1-7 ***Judge me:*** David cried out to God for vindication in reference to those who had risen up against him. These were those who did not believe in the God of Israel, and thus did not honor David as His anointed. David's trust in the deliverance of God was so great, that he sang this song of praise in the midst of danger. Even at the time he sang, he was not yet delivered from the threat of his enemies (Compare At 16:25). ***Eye has seen:*** David had experienced God's deliverance in the past, and thus there was no reason to doubt that God would deliver him again. God's people must be perceptive of how God has worked in their past in order to have comfort in His deliverance in the present.

Chapter 55
PLEA FOR DESTRUCTION OF THE TREACHEROUS

This is a psalm that expresses the feelings of one who has been betrayed. In this case, a friend turned against the psalmist, David. David laments because he lived in a world of treachery, a world in which wicked men sought to destroy him. Though life is filled with iniquity, he put his faith in God.

55:1-8 ***My prayer:*** The psalmist pleaded aloud in agony of spirit. ***Hate me:*** It seemed that every evil had been cast upon the psalmist by his enemies. The trouble that came his way was so severe that he dreamed of escaping into the wilderness for peace. By escaping he would find relief from the social turmoil that surrounded him. However, the thing that one wants to do under great stress—to flee to some quiet place—is the thing one must not do. We must take a stand and face the enemy with the confidence that God provides.

55:9-15 ***Destroy, O Lord:*** This imprecatory plea was for God's judgment to come upon them. David was not asking for vengeance. He was asking that God protect him as the anointed king. ***Divide their tongues:*** David asked that they be set against one another, which thing often comes about naturally as slanderous people rise up together to attack the innocent. ***Strife in the city:*** The city is not identified, but it may be Jerusalem during a time when insurrection prevailed against David from within the city. The social environment of the city was not conducive to peace. Turmoil had been stirred against the king. ***A man my equal:*** The reason why the city was in turmoil was because a supposed equal of David had gained favor among the people. The social turmoil was the result of treachery and betrayal by a friend. ***Wickedness is in their dwellings:*** They spoke treachery in their houses. Treachery is defined by secretly speaking and planning behind another's back in order to bring down the one against whom the treacherous speak. Thus one is treacherous when he speaks against those in whose presence he is not when he speaks his slanderous words.

55:16-23 ***The Lord will save me:*** Regardless of the great turmoil that the psalmist was enduring, he did not blame God. In fact, the opposite occurred in his life. He fled to God for help. He prayed and cried aloud to God that God take action to deliver him. ***Because they do not change:*** They do not change from the error of their way because their motives are evil. ***Those who are at peace with him:*** The treason of the friend was that he put forth his hand to destroy David, God's anointed. When a brother works against those who are doing the work of God, he is treacherous, carrying out treason against God. ***Words were softer than oil:*** With flattering speech the insurrectionist made his way into the hearts of the people in order to stir up betrayal against David. But the smooth and fair speech was as drawn swords that would shoot through the heart of the innocent. When men are not straightforward with their words, they often have treachery in their hearts. Treasonous people seek to win the hearts of the people by smooth and fair speech.

Chapter 56
PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE

The historical background of this psalm was when David fled to Achish who was the Philistine king of the city of Gath (1 Sm 21:10-15). It was there that David pretended to be insane in order that the Philistines not kill him. The psalm is thus a cry of David who continued to trust in the Lord.

56:1-7 ***Daily fighting:*** King Saul had been relentless in pursuing David, even to the point that David fled to Israel's enemy, the Philistines. ***Twist my words:*** One of the indications of evil people is that they twist the words of those they oppose. ***Mark my steps:*** Evil men watch every word and action of those they oppose in order to either catch them in a contradiction or set a trap to ensnare them. One has a treacherous attitude when he is on the lookout for flaws in the speech and behavior of others. ***Cast down:*** This imprecatory request on the part of David manifested his trust in God. He asked that his enemies be cast down because they were scheming against him.

56:8-13 David put his trust in the Lord because the Lord had followed his every step. David knew that he had maintained his integrity before God, and thus he was confident, not arrogant, that he was just before God. ***Tears into your bottle:*** Reference could be to a practice of the ancients who had put their tears of sorrow in a small flask in order to retain them as symbols of sorrow (Compare Rv 5:8). ***God is for me:*** Regardless of the trials into which the faithful might fall, they are continually reassured because they know that God is for them (See Rm 8:28-39; 1 Co 10:13). Faith involves assurance, and assurance involves confidence that one is right before God. ***Vows:*** David had sworn vows, and thus placed himself under laws of faithfulness that he had made to God for himself. His vows became laws to himself that he would remain faithful to the Lord. ***Light of the living:*** He would walk before God in life, being delivered from death. His faithfulness, therefore, would be a shining example to all who would follow God. And so it was, for even today we follow the example of David. We read about the God's blessings for his faithfulness, and thus are encouraged to follow his example

Chapter 57
PLEA FOR RESCUE

The historical setting was David's flight from Saul. On this occasion he hid in a cave near the camp of Saul (1 Sm 22:1; 24:3-8). Verses 7-11 are identical with ch 108:1-5. In this psalm David lamented his situation, but was confident that God would continue to deliver the righteous and bring judgment on the wicked. His faith continued to take him through the trials that he faced when fleeing from Saul.

57:1-5 The psalmist was fleeing from those who were determined to swallow him up in death. He thus dwelt among the wild lions, fleeing from those who were flaming with hatred, animosity and envy. Since God is over all things, David was confident that he would be delivered from those who sought to kill him.

57:6-11 The beauty of David's faith was that in such perilous times as he was in fleeing from Saul, he poured out his faith in song (See At 16:25). He not only sang the songs of praise to God, he composed and sang them in a time of great stress. Though he was among those who set traps to ensnare him, he trusted that God would deliver him from all evil. ***My glory:*** Since we are in the image of God, then our inner soul is glorious.

Chapter 58
CALL FOR PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED

Because of the seven curses in verses 6-9, this would be an imprecatory psalm. The rulers of the land had failed to render justice, and thus the psalmist called for the direct judgment of God on them.

58:1-5 ***O assembly:*** This was the assembly of wicked judges. Because of their unrighteous judgments, evil prevailed throughout the land. They were corrupt, and thus the target of the psalmist's imprecatory pronouncements was against them. ***You weigh:*** They weighed out the evidence as in crooked scales. They distorted their judgments because of prejudiced hearts and bribes. ***Go astray:*** This statement is often used to prove the supposed "sinful nature" of the individual. Since one is supposedly depraved, it is affirmed that his inclination is to turn aside unto evil regardless of his environment. In other words, all of us were supposedly preprogrammed to sin. This theology, is not found in this verse. The Psalmist is not discussing what takes place in the womb. Therefore, that which is under discussion takes place sometime after birth. This would mean that David is not discussing the nature of the soul in this passage. Whatever he is discussing comes about after our physical birth. Psalm 58 is an imprecatory psalm. In other words, it is a call for God to reign down judgment on the wicked. The wicked in the Psalm are those who are working evil against God's servant, David. Therefore, the wicked who are under discussion here are adults who are working evil against David, God's anointed king. James said that one is drawn away by his own lusts (Js 1:14,15). Therefore, one sins only when he reaches the age in his life when he can be tempted. The enemies of David went astray after they had reached the age of accountability. In verse 2 David said of them, *"No, in heart you work wickedness."* In other words, they had chosen in their hearts to work wickedness. They had made a conscious decision to sin. Therefore, they were at or beyond the age when one can make a free-moral decision. David is not talking about newly born babies in this passage. He is talking about adults.

58:6-11 The psalmist called on God to render to these wicked judges seven curses. ***Break their teeth:*** God must render them powerless among the people as beasts without teeth (See 17:12; 34:10; 35:17; 57:4). ***Melt away:*** Let them disappear from the people as water sinks into the sand, leaving the riverbed dry. ***Cut in pieces:*** When they seek to give evil judgments, let their pronouncements fail as the broken shaft of an arrow that is about to be shot. ***As a snail ... pass away:*** As a passing snail that dies from the heat of the sun, let them be terminated from existence. ***Stillborn child:*** As a stillborn baby is disposed in sorrow, let them be taken away. ***Before your pots can feel:*** Before the pots can be warmed for cooking by the heat of burning thorn bushes, they should be taken off the fire. ***With a whirlwind:*** As a tornado takes away property and possessions, let these wicked judges be swept from the presence of the people. ***Righteous will rejoice:*** It is not that the righteous rejoice in the calamity of the wicked, but that the righteous know God's attitude and judgments upon the wicked. The imprecatory nature of this and other psalms was based on the fact that the oppressed knew the will of God. And because they knew the will of God, they called on God to enact His will on the wicked. In this case, the will of God was what the psalmist in poetry portrayed concerning God's will on unrighteous rulers.

Chapter 59
PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE

The historical setting of this psalm is as the title indicates. It was a time when David fled from the court of Saul to his own house (1 Sm 19:10-17). The psalm focuses first on the dangers that lurked in the night, and then it turns to faith in God as one's defense against evil doers and one's refuge from wicked attacks.

59:1-5 ***Deliver me:*** This is the focus of the psalm. The psalmist was in danger of death from the hands of his enemies. His lament was that God arise, not only to deliver him, but to bring judgment on his enemies. His plea was based on the fact that he had not done anything that deserved the onslaught that was coming his way from oppressors. ***All the nations:*** This statement may indicate that there was a threat from those who were not of Israel. ***Spare not:*** The imprecatory plea was that not one of those who sought his life be spared. Since their attack was against God's anointed whom He had ordained should lead in preserving the heritage of Israel, then the attack was against God's plan to bring the Savior into the world. Though David was not aware of this eternal plan of God when he wrote those psalms that touched on the eternal plan of God, we must assume that he wondered about some of the things that he wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12).

59:6-8 ***Like a dog:*** The metaphor is graphic. They were like a pack of wild dogs roaming in the city, looking for any-

thing they might eat. In this case, they were seeking to eat (kill) David. In their minds, they imagined that God did not know of their doings. The ungodly are rarely aware that their evil intentions are known by God.

59:9-13 ***God is my defense:*** The psalmist realized the strength of his enemy. He realized that he could not prevail against his enemy without the strength of God. The word "defense" is literally "high tower." The high tower of a city was the strongest place of security during the siege of a city. Those who take refuge in God, are lifted above the turmoil of battle that prevails among those below. Because the high tower is a place of safety, those who remain there are in peace. ***Do not slay them:*** The psalmist desired that the treacherous people who were against him be left alive. The reason was that they would be a living testimony that God worked among the people to deliver David. Even the treacherous would realize that God worked to deliver David from their hands. Being scattered among the people would be God's judgment on them. However, the gathering of the people in loyalty to David would be a sign that God was for David. In the social context of the psalm, the slanderous enemies would be sent from the city back to the farms. They could no longer be spreading treacherous lies against the king throughout the city.

59:14-17 ***Go around the city:*** If they returned to the city, the slanderous enemies of David would have no audience. They would growl like dogs, but loyalty would be restored to David. Nevertheless, David reigned while he could hear the growl of his enemies. He could so reign because he was fully assured that God had delivered him from treacherous dogs. He knew his destiny as king of Israel, and thus all resistance to his kingship was determined to be the work of evil men. When one understands that his destiny is from God, then he understands that all opposition to his destiny is the work of Satan.

Chapter 60
LAMENT OVER DEFEAT & PLEA FOR HELP

The historical setting of this psalm was a military defeat that was suffered by Israel. It is not clear what defeat this may have been during David's wars. Some have suggested that it took place during David's Syrian conflicts (See 2 Sm 8:3-5; 10:16-19; 1 Ch 18:3-12).

60:1-5 The military defeat that was experienced happened because God withdrew from the army of Israel. Since no confession of sin is made in the psalm, we are not given any reason why the Lord did not go with Israel into this particular battle. ***The land tremble:*** Because of the defeat, Israel was shaken. They no longer felt secure. ***Wine of confusion:*** They were reeling as one drunk with wine. ***Banner:*** Israel had been set up before the nations of the world as a nation of those who had committed themselves to the true God. But in this defeat, they were questioning their relationship with God.

60:6-8 God pronounced His judgment that the nations that were involved in the conflict against Israel were subject to His work among the nations. God would reaffirm the dividing and allotting of the land to His people. Moab, Edom and Philistia would be humiliated before God's people. The defeat was possibly allowed in order to encourage the nations to continue their onslaught against Israel, which onslaught would be crushed by God working through the army of Israel. ***Cast out My shoe:*** This was possibly a symbolic act of claiming possession (Rt 4:7). In their defeat, the nations would be counted as slaves before Israel. Though the Israelites suffered a defeat, God would eventually come to their aid and the nations would be subjected to their control.

60:9-12 The historical setting may have been a time when Israel became arrogant because of their military victories of the past. They had forgotten that it was God who empowered them to conquer and maintain their possessions. Thus the psalmist concluded that they can be victorious only if they turn to God as the one who gives them victory over their enemies.

Chapter 61
CONFIDENCE IN GOD

This brief prayer of lament comes from one who seems to be hindered from going to the tabernacle assembly. It is a psalm of David who laments his plight, but reaffirms his commitment to keep his vows.

61:1-8 ***The rock:*** God has a reservoir of power that is far above what man can comprehend or accomplish on his own. Knowing this, the psalmist asked that God take him to His source of power. It was there that he sought refuge from the turmoil of his plight. ***Strong tower:*** This was the great place of strength in a city, and thus the most secure. It was there that the psalmist knew that he could find security in the shelter of God's wings (17:8). ***Heard my vows:*** A vow was a self-imposed law that one made for himself. It was a promise to God. Once made, it was binding as the law of God. The making of such vows manifested the dedication of one to commit himself to God, or to do some specific works for God. When God heard the vows, therefore, He saw the commitment of the one who made them. He also held one accountable for keeping the vow. ***Heritage:*** These were those who had committed themselves to God, and thus they were given to follow the leadership of David as king of Israel. Great leaders of a nation give an example of godly living for the people.

Chapter 62
GOD IS OUR REFUGE

David lived through many conflicts of battle in his life. As in other psalms, this psalm is also seated in a time of conflict in his life. However, there is reflected in this psalm a sense of calm as the psalmist relinquished his predicament to God.

62:1-4 ***Silent before God:*** David was silent in complaint. His silence affirmed his confidence that God would come to his aid. ***Rock:*** He was reassured that God would deliver him from all dangers. ***My rock ... salvation ... defense:*** He would not become stressful because of his great faith that God would protect him from all attempts on his life (27:5; 59:9). When the Christian stands on the gospel which he obeyed, he has the same emotional security (See comments 1 Co 15:1,2). ***Leaning wall:*** As a leaning wall is about to fall, so were David's enemies. ***Not be moved:*** He would not be moved from his

dedication to God because of the circumstances of his life. Faithful is the person who does not allow the circumstances in which he lives to determine his faithfulness to God.

62:5-8 David expected to be delivered from his circumstances because he trusted in God. Expectation (hope) is the consequence of trust in God.

62:9-12 ***Low ... high degree:*** Both positions in society are as a breath. Those of low status in society should not envy those of high status simply because the life of both is brief (Js 1:9-11). The person of low status may envy the one of high status, but if by chance he becomes one of high status, the position for which he aspired in society is discovered to be disappointing. The point is that all distinctions that society may give to people vanish away as a breath with the passing of the people. Riches pass with those who possess them, and thus there is no spiritual opportunity that is presented to the rich by their riches. On the contrary, those who place their confidence in riches are led away from complete trust in God. ***Power belongs to God:*** Satan has no power. All supernatural power belongs to the omnipotent God of all things. The creation cannot possess the power of the Creator, unless the Creator relinquishes power to the created.

Chapter 63
THIRSTING AFTER GOD

The psalmist expresses a close relationship with God, and thus seeks after Him at all times. He expresses his trust in God and confidence that God will work in his life to accomplish His purposes.

63:1-8 In the private devotions of the psalmist, he meditated on God and His work in the morning and at night (1:1,2). In this case, David longed to witness the presence of God at the sanctuary of the tabernacle. The words of this psalm express the deep devotion of one who is totally committed to God and His work in his life. These are the words of one who has not let the affairs of this world displace his meditation on God. Through meditation, one disconnects from the turmoil of the physical and social life of the world in order to contemplate his relationship with God. He reminds himself of what is most valuable in life and those things that will go beyond the end of the world.

63:9-11 In the king's devotion to God, he pondered those who would seek to destroy him. Such were the continual thoughts of God's anointed kings. There were always those who manifested their fight against God by fighting against His anointed kings of Israel. David was thus not without his enemies simply because there were always wicked men who had no consideration for the things of God. He was thus constantly aware of those who would remove the authority of God from among the people by killing the God-anointed king.

Chapter 64
DELIVERANCE FROM TREACHEROUS ENEMIES

The focus of this psalm is on the workers of evil. It is a psalm of lament where the psalmist made a plea to God concerning his plight in life. He lamented the fact that he had been attacked by slanderous people. Nevertheless, the psalmist placed his trust in God who would defeat evil counselors who worked against His anointed.

64:1-6 ***Secret counsel of the wicked:*** Ungodly men scheme in secret to destroy those who oppose them. Their counsel is wicked simply because they devise slanderous statements against those they oppose in order to gain a following (See comments 3 Jn). They counsel among themselves in order to develop a united coalition against those they seek to destroy. ***Insurrection:*** The metaphors of the poem magnify the extent to which the schemers had planned in order to move against the king. Their tongue was a sharpened sword to cut asunder the reputation of God's anointed. They released poisonous words that caused the people to question the rightful reign of God's king. They devised traps into which they would capture the righteous in supposed contradictions. All such schemes manifested the unrighteous hearts of those who would involve themselves in treacherous behavior

64:7-10 ***Their own tongue to fall on themselves:*** If the righteous will be patient for the work of God, God will deliver them by making the slanderous speech of the wicked turn on themselves. People eventually identify the unrighteous heart of a slanderous person. As the saying goes, the slanderous person can fool some of the people all the time, but not all the people all the time. ***Will flee away:*** At first the people may believe the words of a slanderous person. However, people are generally not ignorant, and thus will eventually discover the ungodly heart of the one who attacks another with slander. ***Righteous will be glad:*** Those who rejoice in the Lord are those who understand the work of God through special people by whom He seeks to lead the people.

Chapter 65
GOD'S FAVOR

This is a psalm of adoration that is centered around harvest time, or a time when the harvest was completed. It is thus a psalm of thanksgiving for God's care of His people.

65:1-4 ***Vow be performed:*** A vow was made to God by an individual who placed a "law" on himself. It was binding as a law of God until the vow was fulfilled. ***Iniquities prevail:*** Sin is too much for us to bear, and thus God will cleanse us. One must understand the ability of man to easily slip into sin. He must understand this in order to cling to the help of God to stay away from sin (See comments 1 Co 10:13).

65:5-8 ***Of all earth and of those ... afar off:*** Though God had a special covenant with Israel, He was still the king of all the world. He claimed people of faith who were not of Israel (See comments of Jonah). What the Israelites eventually failed to realize was that God accepted anyone who came to Him through obedient faith. ***Clothed with power:*** God is not only the God of the inhabitants of the world. He is also the Creator and controller of all the physical world (Hb 1:3). The evidence of His power is clearly manifested in the physical world (See comments Rm 1:20). ***Morning and evening:*** The sunrise in the east and the sunset in the west.

65:9-13 Since Israel was a rural community of farmers, great emphasis was placed on God's provision for crops at the time of harvest. The nation depended on consistent rainfall.

The farmers, therefore, were dependent on God's store of water that was in the clouds. He could either release or retain the water of the clouds. When He released the rain, man, animals and earth all rejoiced over the graciousness of God who showed favor to man.

Chapter 66
GOD'S WORK & PRAYER ANSWERED

As indicated by the pronouns, this psalm of worship focuses first on worship that is given by the people (vss 1-12), and then individually by the psalmist (vss 13-20). The worship flows from hearts that have responded to God's answer to their prayer.

66:1-12 The psalmist used Israel's exodus from Egyptian captivity as the illustration of God's deliverance of His people. ***All you lands:*** The deliverance of Israel from captivity was an evidence to all the world that God was working with and for the Israelites in order to bring them forth as a nation. For this reason, the world should rejoice in the fact that God's work among men was manifested in His deliverance of Israel. We should especially rejoice for we understand now that the birth of Israel was for the purpose of giving birth to the Messiah, the Savior of the world. ***The sea ... the flood:*** Reference was to the parting of the Red Sea and the Jordan River (Ex 14:21; Ja 3:14-17). ***Tested us:*** Though delivered from Egypt into the land of promise, there was continued testing of Israel when they fell into sin. They were thus refined as gold with fire.

66:13-20 The pronouns in this section change from the plural to the singular. Because God has performed so greatly, the psalmist brought his offerings to the Lord in thanksgiving. When we witness the work of God in our lives, we should be motivated by thanksgiving (See 2 Co 4:15). ***Vows:*** Vows were made in the time of trouble (See Lv 3:1-17). These vows were kept in thanksgiving for God's deliverance. ***I will declare:*** Those who have been delivered by God should proclaim to others how God has worked in their lives. Perception of answered prayer is an opportunity to proclaim that God still works among His people. ***If I regard iniquity in my heart:*** If we harbor sin in our lives, our channel of prayer to God will be stopped (Compare Jb 27:9; 31:27; Pv 15:29; 28:9; Is 1:15). God responds to those who seek to please Him. If one would chose to turn his back on God, however, God will not answer the prayers of the sinner as He would the prayers of the faithful.

Chapter 67
CALL FOR PRAISE OF GOD

This is a psalm of adoration that calls on all the world to give praise to God. It could have been a praise that was offered for the crops, and subsequent harvest.

67:1-7 ***Your salvation:*** If the Lord is gracious and brings rain to produce a bountiful harvest, then the surrounding nations looking on the situation of Israel would recognize that God was working for His people. The special blessing of saving them from famine would be an occasion for the nations to give praise to God. When the people praise the Lord, the earth will give an increase in crops because of God's special blessing. When the other nations saw the special blessing of rain on the crops of the Israelites, they perceived that Israel's God was working for them. We must not forget that Israel was located in the most significant trade route of the ancient world. Traders traversed the land of Palestine from both the countries to the north and south of the land. When there was famine in Palestine, traders could not be supplied while traveling through the land. When crops abounded, the nations rejoiced because the trade routes were open.

Chapter 68
GOD OF SINAI & THE SANCTUARY

This psalm deals with many subjects. It may have been a collection of smaller psalms, possibly being several short psalms that the priests sang as they went ceremonially to the sanctuary.

68:1-6 Wicked people cannot stand in the presence of God, for if they did, they would melt away as candle wax. Sin can never be in the presence of God, and thus the sinner must find a solution for his sin. ***Name:*** The KJV adds "*Jah*," or *Yah*, an abbreviated form of the word *Yahweh*. This was Israel's name for God. ***Father of the fatherless:*** Orphans and widows are especially defenseless, and thus deserve special attention by God. He is their defender. ***The desolate:*** God provides a dwelling place for the homeless. He frees those in bondage, but consigns to parched land those who rebel against His will.

68:7-14 The psalm turns in these verses to focus on Israel's exodus from Egypt, their receiving of the word at Mt. Sinai, and their wandering in the wilderness because of their sin. ***You went forth before:*** See Ex 19:16-19. ***Plentiful rain:*** It seems that God caused unusual rain to occur in the wilderness when Israel was wandering there for 40 years. The unusual rain was a sign that God was caring for His people in a desert place. ***Inheritance:*** The promised land of Palestine was the inheritance that was given to Israel. The word: When the nations heard of the wonders of God that He worked through Israel, they fled before them. If they did not willingly flee, they were defeated by God working through the army of Israel. ***Spoils:*** The women who stayed behind with the sheepfolds when the battles were raging divided the spoils of conquered enemies. ***Wings of a dove:*** The army of Israel returned to the women victorious, loaded with the spoils of war, gold and silver. ***As snow on Zalmon:*** The exact location of this mountain in Palestine is not known. However, Israel's defeat of the armies of the Canaanites was so easy with God's help, that it was as natural as the snow fall on Zalmon.

68:15-23 The psalmist now turned to giving glory to God for His daily blessings. ***Mountain of Bashan:*** Bashan was a mountainous area in northeast Galilee. The psalmist personified these mountains to be as those who were envious of where God dwells. ***Led captivity captive:*** Verse 18 is significant because it was quoted by Paul in reference to what happened when Jesus ascended. Psalm 68 is a victory psalm. While seated in the historical context of David's victories over his enemies, the prophecy of verse 18 reached many years into the future. David said that the One of whom he spoke in the psalm led captivity into captivity. This was a prophecy of the

coming downfall of Satan. Because Paul quoted the passage in reference to Christ in Ephesians 4:8, there is no question that the psalmist, through the Spirit, was pointing the initial readers to someone in the future. Paul was looking back when he quoted the psalm. When Jesus ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. The gospel was preached by Peter and the church began when men submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus. In Acts 1 Jesus ascended to the Father, and in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit was given to men. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter stated that the Spirit had been poured out (At 2:33). But Peter also said that the gift of the Holy Spirit was to all who submit to the gospel by immersion (At 2:38,39). In Ephesians 4:11 Paul again referred to Psalm 68 in reference to Jesus setting forth "gifts" of ministries in the church in order to edify and build up the church. These ministries referred to teaching ministries as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd/teachers. Such ministries were set forth by Jesus in the church in order that men no longer be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Ep 4:14). Therefore, in the prophecy and fulfillment of Psalm 68:18, God was saying that the time would come when Satan would be led away into captivity by God's empowerment of His people. This would happen when Jesus ascended on high (Ep 4:8). Satan lost his powerful influence over men when God's people were empowered by the Holy Spirit who taught them all things concerning the truth (See Jn 14:26; 16:13,14). Satan could no longer lead people away from God as he so led them before the coming of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. ***Received gifts:*** When God took nations into captivity, the spoils became gifts to Israel (See comments Ep 4:8). ***Daily bears us up:*** God continued to provide for Israel throughout their history. When they walked in His commandments, they were blessed. ***Hairy scalp:*** This may be a reference to the soldiers who allowed their hair to grow when they were in conflict with an enemy. It was shaved when they returned home. In this case, God would inflict punishment on the wicked who opposed His people.

68:24-29 ***In the sanctuary:*** With the procession of the singers and players, the Lord is pictured as going into the sanctuary. Benjamin and Judah (the southern kingdom), with Zebulun and Naphtali (the northern kingdom), represent all Israel. ***Your temple:*** Neither the capital of Jerusalem, nor the temple were the original plan of God for Israel. Jerusalem and the temple were a concession of God because David wanted to consolidate his reign in Jerusalem, as well as maintain the religious center of reference for Israel in the city. Instead of continuing the movement of the tabernacle among the tribal territories, which had taken place for over 400 years before David, the ark of God was brought to Jerusalem where Solomon eventually built the temple to house it.

68:30-35 ***Beasts ... bulls:*** These animals represented the raging nations who were against Israel. ***Egypt ... Ethiopia:*** From these far countries came those who submitted to Solomon. David conquered the enemies of Israel, but Solomon reigned over them. Through trade, foreign nations came to admire the wisdom of Solomon and the greatness of his kingdom. Solomon increased the wealth of Israel because of his relationship with foreign nations.

Chapter 69
CRY FOR DELIVERANCE

The psalmist here pours out his heart because of the great despair he was suffering from the oppression of his enemies. This is a psalm of grief. It is an intense psalm that comes from one who is in deep sorrow. It is imprecatory in nature in reference to the enemies that surrounded the psalmist. However, there are Messianic statements in the psalm that focus on the final salvation that God would provide in the future.

69:1-4 The circumstances in which the psalmist found himself were overwhelming. As a result, he had cried until he was exhausted. He was hated without cause and his enemies had no reason to stand against him. In all this despair, he confessed his sins, thinking that such might have brought on the opposition he was facing. Some may have taken advantage of his confession, assuming that such was a sign of weakness. However, he knew that God knew he was not guilty of those things of which he was accused. ***Hate me without cause:*** See Jn 15:25.

69:5-12 ***Those who wait on You:*** The psalmist was concerned for those who might suffer as a result of his situation. ***A stranger:*** His enemies had persecuted him, even those who were closest to him shunned him. ***Zeal of Your house:*** See Jn 2:17. Because of his zeal for the Lord, others turned away from him. His commitment intimidated others, and thus brought persecution upon him. ***Men jeered:*** Those who would commit themselves totally to the Lord will be ridiculed by those who are comfortable with indifference. ***Proverb:*** Or, byword. His life of commitment to the Lord became contemptible to those who were religious, but behaved contrary to the will of God. ***Sit in the gate:*** The elders sat at the gates of the cities (Rt 4:1; Jb 29:7,8). ***Song of the drunkards:*** It seemed that all society had rejected the psalmist. He was treated with contempt by the lowest of society.

69:13-18 ***My prayer:*** In situations similar to that in which the psalmist found himself, prayer is one's only recourse. As he was sinking deeper into the social rejection of the people, he reached up to the only One who could help. It was a time when the psalmist had to depend on the mercy of God for deliverance. Since there was no one who would take pity on him, he trusted that God would have mercy.

69:19-28 The statements of these verses are the imprecatory pleas of the psalmist that God severely judged those who rejected and attacked His anointed. ***Gall ... vinegar:*** See Mt 27:34. The psalmist asked that God bring judgment on his enemies with the curse of seven things in their lives: **(1)** their food, **(2)** their eyes, **(3)** their bodies, **(4)** the coming wrath of God, **(5)** their houses, **(6)** that their guilt increase, and **(7)** that their names be blotted out of the book of life. When reading such direct imprecatory statements in the psalms we must always understand that the imprecatory statements were from God against those who were fighting against His eternal plan through Israel. At the time the imprecatory psalms were written, Israel was headed for apostasy, which apostasy would take the nation into captivity. The imprecatory statements, therefore, must be understood in view of the fact that God was saying to Israel's enemies that they should not mess with His

plan to preserve Israel for the salvation of man through Jesus.

69:29-36 The psalmist first spoke of the gloom of his life. He then called on God to judge his enemies. In these final words there is a message of hope. Regardless of how difficult things had become, there was always hope that God would come to one's aid. ***Poor ... prisoners:*** God hears the prayers of the poor, and He does not despise those who have been in bondage for Him. The deliverance of the psalmist, and those who remained loyal to him, would be evidence that God had worked in their lives. It would be evidence that God was on their side to establish again the cities of Judah in order that they possess the land.

Chapter 70
CRY FOR HELP

See the identical words that are here and Psalm 40:13-17. In this psalm, the psalmist seems to be in a predicament where he needed urgent help from the Lord. He knew that the Lord would deliver him, but he pleaded that He not take His time in responding.

70:1-5 The psalmist expressed no doubt that the Lord would come to his rescue. It was a matter of timing. There were those who were seeking his demise, and thus, he felt that if the Lord did not come soon, he would be overcome. The situation was whether the help from the Lord would arrive in time. The psalm was written from the perspective of human thought, and thus urgency is always on the minds of those who pray urgent prayers. God will answer, but His answer comes when He knows best.

Chapter 71
PRAYER OF AN OLD MAN

These words come from a person who had throughout his life depended on God. It is a picture of one who had spent a lifetime serving the Lord, and in his old age he was a thankful person for God's care throughout his life.

71:1-6 The past deliverances that God had provided for the psalmist were evidence that God would do the same in the future. Those who are perceptive of God's work in their lives in the past have a strong faith that God will work in the future. ***Continually resort:*** This was not a person who wavered throughout his life. He remained consistently faithful to the Lord. One who falls and is restored suffers scars and guilt from his falling. But one who remains continually faithful to the Lord throughout his life can speak the words of this Psalm.

71:7-16 ***I am as a wonder:*** God's past protection of him was a sign to every one of the wondrous works of God in the lives of faithful believers. ***Enemies:*** Though God had been faithful to him in the past, in his old age there were still enemies who saw his old age as an opportunity for conspiracy. The enemies had assumed that his age was a sign of weakness and that God was no longer with him. ***I will hope continually:*** What is revealed in the spiritual character of the psalmist is the fact that regardless of the threat of his enemies, he did not blame God for his predicament. The threatening social environment in which he was did not shake his faith in God to deliver him. ***Do not know their limits:*** There is no limit to the mercy of God. ***Strength of the Lord:*** See 2 Co 12:9. The Lord gives strength to those who continue in His work and word.

71:17-24 ***From my youth:*** The psalmist's faithfulness started in his youth (See At 16:1-3). Youth who recognize that God should be the guide of their lives are truly blessed if they continue their faithfulness into old age. They can look back to a blessed life as did the psalmist. ***Showed Your strength to this generation:*** Faithfulness throughout one's life is a testimony to others. The consistent faithfulness of a believer is one of the greatest witnesses to the power of God working in one's life. ***Great and sore troubles:*** Living a life that is faithful to the Lord does not mean that one will live without troubles (2 Tm 3:12). Being faithful does not take away troubles. It helps us to get through them (1 Co 10:13). ***Bring me up again:*** The psalmist looked beyond death to a time when he would come again from the grave. ***All day long:*** Evidence of a faithful life to the Lord is daily praise of His name (See Rm 12:1,2). One's life can be a testimony to the Lord when it is consistent with praise of the Lord.

Chapter 72
REIGN OF A RIGHTEOUS KING

This psalm has an immediate historical application, but also a Messianic fulfillment. Though the message of the psalm pictures the ideal earthly reign, such ideal social and economic environment did not happen during the reign of Solomon, but such did in the church of Jesus. We must view this kingdom from the viewpoint of the nature of the true kingdom of Jesus, where He now reigns over all things. He now reigns over all things, but only those of the church are the submissive subjects. All those over whom He reigns should submit to His reign, but they do not (See comments Ph 2:5-11).

72:1-7 As a Messianic psalm we must understand that the dominion of the king's son was universal, from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth. However, within this dominion were those whose spiritual needs were filled. There was peace among those who had fulfilled spiritual needs. We would view these as the church within the kingdom reign of the Son who now reigns from heaven over all things (Ep 1:20-23; 1 Tm 6:15). If we view the fulfillment of this socioeconomic situation yet in the future in reference to us today, then the meaning would be a time when the wicked are cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Mt 25:46; Rv 21:7-15). However, this interpretation would be questionable on the basis that the duration of the time of this kingdom reign would go as long as the moon endures. There seems to be an in-time existence of the work of the king, which in view of the nature of the church would exist at the time of the existence of the present world (Compare 1 Co 15:26-28 with 2 Pt 3).

72:8-11 The picture presented is that during Solomon's reign there was a prophetic utterance of the kingdom that was to come when the Messiah would sit on the throne of David. We cannot make a strict comparison between the reign of Solomon and the present reign of Jesus. Jesus now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). He now reigns over

all things (Ep 1:23). He upholds all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3). None of these things were within the sovereignty of Solomon. Nevertheless, the reign of Solomon is the best historical example there is for a metaphorical picture of the Messianic reign of Jesus. ***All nations will serve Him:*** In reference to the present reign of Jesus, all nations should serve Him (See comments Ph 2:5-11). However, they do not, for there are insurrections in the present kingdom reign of Jesus. If we understand this to refer to the church, then there are obedient subjects in every nation of the world who serve Him (Mt 28:19,20). The church is universal. We would view this prophecy as a statement that within the realm of the obedient (the church), kings of all nations would bow down and serve Jesus (1 Tm 6:15). However, within the realm of His kingdom reign (all the world), there would be those who would not bow down. All the present church is within the kingdom reign of the Son, but not all the kingdom reign is limited to the church (See comments 1 Pt 3:22). Jesus is king over all things, but only the members of the church are the submitted subjects of His kingdom reign.

72:12-20 ***Deliver ... save:*** This is the picture of a redeeming king who would care for the needs of his people. He would not let his people be oppressed (See 1 Sm 26:21; 2 Kg 1:14; Ps 116:15). Because of his benevolence toward those who are under the sovereignty of his reign, he would be praised. As gold from Sheba was brought in order to give honor to Solomon, so the people of the world will bring themselves as gifts for the honor and glory of the redeeming King Jesus (Rm 12:1,2). ***All nations will call Him blessed:*** All those of every nation who submit to His kingdom reign will call Him blessed. ***Prayers of David:*** This statement would mark the conclusion of this portion of David's psalms in Books I & II, for there are other psalms of David in the following Books.

Book III
(73:1 – 89:52)

There are 17 psalms in this Book. They were written by Asaph, Korah, David, Heman and Ethan. These are psalms of lament, worship, praise, thanksgiving and repentance.

Chapter 73
END OF CONTRAST BETWEEN WICKED & RIGHTEOUS

The theme of this psalm is a question that was addressed in the book of Job. The psalmist wondered why the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer. Ecclesiastes approaches the same theme concerning the person who was not considered righteous, but at the same time, had everything (Ec 7:16). The answer to the question is that God has created an environment in which free-moral individuals can interact and prosper according to their own abilities. It is also an environment wherein the righteous can be taken advantage of by the wicked, and thus the wicked use the environment for their own self-interest. Because the minds of the righteous are on spiritual things, they are often the victims of those who do not think beyond this world.

73:1-3 ***God is good to Israel:*** God had been good to the nation as a whole. But when he considered certain individuals in society, he began to question why the wicked prosper. ***Prosperity of the wicked:*** There may have been certain individuals with whom the psalmist was acquainted who prospered, while he was oppressed with poverty. ***Envious:*** One may question the prosperity of the wicked, while the righteous suffer, but our questioning should not turn into envy of what the wealthy possess. As in the book of Job, the righteous must content themselves with God is in control and is working all things together for good for His people (Rm 8:28).

73:4-12 The words of these verses portray the nature and life of the wicked who prosper. They are well fed, having a life without trouble. They go unchecked with their oppressive conduct and unscrupulous dealings. They have more than one could desire. They speak with arrogance. And because they are arrogant in their speech, people often turn to them for leadership and counsel. They continue to prosper, regardless of their unrighteous behavior.

73:13-20 At this point in the psalm, the psalmist wondered why he had sought to walk righteously in his life, because the result was his oppression. He complained until he went to the sanctuary of God. It was there that he understood that the end of the wicked was doom. Though their lives seemed glorious, their end was destruction. Thus the psalmist was willing to sacrifice the seemingly glorious life of the unrighteous in order to avoid their end (See comments Lk 16:19-31).

73:21-28 These last words are a confession. The psalmist realized the folly of envying the prosperity of the wicked because his end was destruction. He felt grieved that he had ventured into a desire of being as the unrighteous wealthy. His envy was based on ignorance of the true life of the wicked, and thus he behaved as a wild beast before God. He renewed his recommitment to the Lord, being assured that God would receive him into glory. He chose to remain close to God on earth in order to eternally remain in the presence of God (2 Th 1:6-9). He did not desire to commit spiritual adultery with the things of the world (Js 4:4). ***Those who are far from you:*** In these words the psalmist revealed his hope of being eternally with God. Since the unrighteous are far from God on earth, they will be destroyed from the presence of God when they die (2 Th 1:6-9).

Chapter 74
DEVASTATION OF THE LAND

This psalm may have been written in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It is a lamenting psalm that was written as a dirge over the destruction of the city of God. As the book of Lamentations, it is an expression of deep sorrow over the fall of God's people.

74:1-11 Assuming that the destruction that took place was the 586 B.C. destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army, we would conclude that Israel had reaped the result of her apostasy. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed (2 Kg 25:9). The temple was burned. The people were taken into captivity. The psalm, therefore, could have been written while the psalmist was in exile during the Babylonian captivity. The psalmist called on God to remember His people

that He had formerly redeemed from Egyptian captivity. In this case, the psalmist saw the destruction of the enemy as the means by which another redemption could take place. But at this time, he saw only the signs of the destruction of Israel's enemy. And thus, the psalmist called on God to take His hand out of His bosom and destroy their captors.

74:12-17 The psalmist resorted to the great wonders that God did in the past in order to gain strength that He would do the same for Israel in the future. God divided the Red Sea (Ex 14:21). He humbled the powers of Egypt. He opened springs and torrents of water (Ex 17:6; Nm 20:11). He dried up the waters of the Jordan in order that Israel pass into the land of promise (Ja 3:15,16). The omnipotent God of all is able, therefore, to deliver Israel in this time of despair. He is able to deliver all those who are in the bondage of their own sin.

74:18-23 In order to stir hope for the future, the psalmist called on God to remember the ways of the ungodly and their blasphemy of His name. And thus he called on God not to allow His defenseless nation to be consumed by those who had no respect for Him. ***Do not let the oppressed return ashamed:*** The psalmist did not want the righteous to go away with unanswered prayers. Thus the arrogance of those who had reproached God should stir God into action. In the case of Israel's deliverance from captivity, God did take action. He delivered His people from Babylonian captivity (See Er 1:1-6).

Chapter 75
PROUD HUMBLED & THE RIGHTEOUS EXALTED

In this psalm of praise the psalmist encourages the readers who were suffering in a time of national chaos. His encouragement centered around the fact that one must be patient for the deliverance of God. God determines the time He will act on behalf of His people.

75:1-3 ***Name is near:*** God's presence is identified by His name (See Is 30:27). ***Appointed time:*** In the context of our impatient pleas, we must recognize that God determines the time when He will answer. Though the world seems like it is falling apart, we must keep in mind that God is the one who stabilizes everything in order to bring about His purposes.

75:4-8 ***Lift up the horn:*** One should not flaunt his power. ***Stiff neck:*** One should not speak with defiant words of rebellion. ***Promotion:*** Self exaltation will not accomplish what God desires, for it is He who judges with justice. ***Cup:*** This is the foaming wine that has fermented, of which the wicked must drink the last bitter drop.

75:9,10 In contrast to the wicked, the righteous will sing the praises of God. The righteous will give glory to Him for His protection of the righteous. In His time, God will cut off the powers of the wicked in order to exalt the power of the righteous. The righteous must, therefore, wait on His deliverance.

Chapter 76
GOD OF POWER

In this psalm, the psalmist praises God for giving victory to Israel. The Lord is exalted as the One who delivers Israel from her enemies. There is no certain historical background for this psalm, though some have affirmed that the deliverance was Jerusalem from the attack of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, during the reign of Hezekiah (See 2 Kg 19:35-37; Is 37:36-38).

76:1-3 ***Salem:*** Jerusalem (Gn 14:18; Hb 7:1,2). The victory over Israel's enemy took place at Jerusalem. The victory that took place was the work of God, and thus God was Israel's defense.

76:4-9 ***Slept their sleep ... dead sleep:*** These figures point to the result of the angel of God who swept over the army of Sennacherib and brought death to 185,000 men. When the morning came after all the warriors of Sennacherib had died, none of them could raise their hands in battle against Israel. ***When once You are angry:*** The sweeping death of the Assyrian army by the angel of God proves what the psalmist here taught. When the anger of God is aroused, there is no strength of man that can stand in His way. God's power is awesome, and thus to be greatly feared by mortal man. ***Save all the meek:*** In this historical case of God's judgment against Israel's enemies, is illustrated God's deliverance of His people. God's judgment on the wicked in time is often His deliverance of His people.

76:10-12 ***Wrath of man will praise You:*** God clothes Himself with praise by putting down the wrath of man that is often unleashed against His people. No matter how strong man's efforts may be against God, He will overcome man. The stronger the opposition of man, the more God is glorified when He brings to nothing man's efforts (See Ex 9:16; Is 45:24). ***Vows:*** In the time of peril, the righteous probably made promises to the Lord. And now that they had been delivered, the psalmist reminded them to fulfill their vows. If they did not fulfill their vows it would be a mockery of God's deliverance (Ec 5:4,5).

Chapter 77
THE COMFORT OF GOD'S DEEDS

This psalm begins with a lament, but ends with joy and praise. It is a contrast between times of sorrow and times of song. The theme of the psalm is that if one broods over the calamities of life, he will sink deeper into despair. But if he meditates on the goodness of God, life will be blessed with hope and joy.

77:1-9 The first nine verses express the lament of the psalmist who cried out to the Lord. Because of his despair, the psalmist wondered if God had terminated His mercy. ***My hand was stretched out:*** The despair of the psalmist was intense. Throughout the night he stretched out his hands to God in supplication. ***Call to remembrance:*** At the time, the psalmist was in a time of emotional turmoil. He then remembered better times and former blessings that came from God. He remembered times when he sang in the night. But when he wrote this psalm, he was in agony, searching for an answer from God.

77:10-20 The mood of the psalmist changed when he started focusing on the greatness of God and all the good that He had done in the past for His people. The psychology of the psalm is that when one focuses on the negative (vss 1-9), he

can think himself into despair. But when one focuses on the positive things of God (vss 10-20), he can at least restore his mental health. ***My grief:*** There is no indication in the psalm that God had come to the rescue of the psalmist. Because God had not responded, the psalmist contented himself by recalling the great things that God had already done. ***I will remember:*** This is the key to restoring joy in one's life. The psalmist reasoned that he must think on the great things that God had done in his past. Though there may be no relief from suffering in the present, one must concentrate on the great things of the past. Because God has worked in our lives in the past does not guarantee that He has to do so in the present. It is sometimes God's will that we endure pain and suffering in order to guide our minds to His past work in our lives. ***Redeemed:*** This metaphor is significant in reference to salvational contexts in the New Testament. By a strong arm God had physically redeemed His people out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 15:16; see Is 63:12). They were redeemed by God, for they could not redeem themselves. ***Waters ... clouds ... lightnings:*** God is sovereign over the physical world. The natural world is totally under His control. It is under His control to the point that He uses the natural world to preserve His people. ***Hand of Moses and Aaron:*** Imprinted on the minds of Israel was a time when God took His people through a divided Red Sea by the hand of Moses and Aaron. It was an everlasting action on the part of God for both Israel and the church. God will lead His people through the torrential trials of this world into a better world to come.

Chapter 78
GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

This is a poetic history of Israel from the time of their deliverance from Egyptian captivity to the time when the first kings were anointed over the nation, a period of about 400 years. The psalmist rehearses the times when Israel forgot the statutes of God. His primary focus was on the apostasy of the northern ten tribes. But because there is emphasis on both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel, the historical background would possibly be the time when Israel divided into two kingdoms. Thus the psalm could have been written during the early beginnings of the apostasy of the northern kingdom under the leadership of Jeroboam.

78:1-8 ***Give ear:*** In order to prevent apostasy in the future, the psalmist called for the attention of the fathers to listen to the failures of Israel in the past. It is the responsibility of the fathers to teach the children. The illustration of what the psalmist revealed in the psalm is an example of the failure of parents to teach their children. ***Dark sayings:*** This would be a direct or sharp teaching, something as a riddle (See Mt 13:34,35). In this context, that which was to be rehearsed by the psalmist were the wondrous works and commandments of God. ***Established a testimony:*** See Ex 25:16,21. ***Appointed a law:*** Since men cannot establish moral laws by which to guard themselves from national degradation, a law from above must be instituted. This law must then be passed from one generation to another (Dt 4:9,10; 6:6,7; 11:18,19). One difference between Israel and the surrounding nations was the fact that Israel's law originated from outside the thinking of the nation. The laws of the nations around Israel came from within, from their own reasoning. In the progression of thought of this psalm, the psalmist identified the apostasy of Israel as their digression from the law of God to the acceptance of the laws of the nations who had created behavior after their own desires. It came to the point in their history that there was no difference between the behavior of the Israelites and the nations. Such was a sign that Israel had fallen from the law of God.

78:9-16 ***Ephraim:*** Ephraim was the younger of the two sons of Joseph (Gn 48:8-20). He, as his brother Manasseh, was chosen to be the father of two tribes of Israel. Ephraim became the largest of the northern kingdom of Israel. Because Ephraim was the dominant tribe of the northern kingdom, the kingdom was often referred to as Ephraim. Ephraim eventually led in the apostasy of the northern kingdom, which apostasy eventually led to the exile of the northern tribes in 722/21 B.C. by the conquering army of Assyria. They went into exile because they (1) cowardly turned their backs in battle, (2) did not keep the covenant of God, (3) refused to be obedient to the law of God, and (4) forgot God's works throughout their history. ***Marvelous things:*** Those faith-building things that they forgot were (1) the miraculous plagues of God that He brought on Egypt (Ex 5:1 – 12:31), (2) the dividing of the Red Sea in order to free Israel from Egyptian captivity (Ex 14:15-22), (3) their leading by a cloud and fire throughout their wilderness wanderings (Ex 13:21,22), and (4) the water that came from a split rock (Ex 17:1-6; Nm 20:7-11).

78:17-39 This history explains how God was patient with the Israelites from the time they left Egyptian captivity to the time they entered the land of promise. Throughout this time God was changing their culture from the bondage culture that had been developed throughout 400 years of captivity in Egypt to the freedom culture that they needed in order to remain an independent state in the land of promise. Throughout this change in culture, they went through times of apostasy and restoration as God trained them to be dependent on Him, and not the taskmasters of Egypt. During this time of transformation, they complained about their food. God answered with manna and quail (Ex 16:14; Nm 11:31,32). ***Years of terror:*** They had so many trials as a result of their unbelief throughout the 40 years of wilderness wanderings that they referred to the time in the wilderness as years of terror. ***Flattered Him ... lied to Him:*** When they were disciplined by the Lord for their unbelief, they were insincere in their confession and repentance. Both kingdoms of the divided Israel were insincere because they eventually fell back again into their sin. Their history of sin and repentance manifested that they were unstable in their faith, and often hypocritical in their repentance. ***Their heart was not right:*** This seems to have been a historical problem, not a temporary slip into unfaithfulness. Their culture of rebellion led them to reap continually the discipline of God. ***A wind that passes away:*** God knew that Israel was composed of men whose lives were but a breath of existence on earth. For this reason, He had compassion on them nationally because individual generations came and went. He did not

hold the nation of Israel responsible for the rebellion of any one generation that went into apostasy. Though the children reaped the consequences of their sinful fathers, each generation of the children was responsible for itself.

78:40-53 This poetic history of Israel left them without excuse in reference to faith. Their faith was based on the evidence of God who worked directly in their lives in order to give birth to them as a nation. The plagues that were brought upon Egypt were evidence that God worked in order to deliver the people from their enemies, the Egyptians (See comments Ex 8–12). Thus they had no excuse for their rebellion. As a nation, they had experienced the miraculous revelation of God.

78:54-64 They were brought out of Egyptian captivity and given the land of promise by allotment (Ja 14). It was God who cast out the nations in the land of Canaan. He did so by empowering each Israelite soldier in the battles against the Canaanite armies. There would have been no possible way for Israel to have secured the land if it were not for the aid of God working through the soldiers of Israel. ***Tempted and provoked the Most High God:*** Their culture of rebellion continued with them even into their possession of the land of promise. They did not allow the direct work of God in their history to be a foundation of faith that would lead them to trust totally in Him. They did not allow the word of their fathers to be the foundation of their faith, as those today who do not allow the written word of God to be the foundation of their faith (Rm 10:17). ***Deceitful bow:*** They were as a malfunctioning bow that could not launch into the future a faithful generation. ***High places:*** They established assemblies on high places that were dedicated to the worship of idol gods. ***Move Him to jealousy:*** They committed spiritual adultery by giving honor to other gods, which gods they had created after their own image. For this reason, God rejected them and gave them up for captivity (See 1 Sm 15:23; Hs 4:6). ***Tabernacle of Shiloh:*** For a period of time throughout the history of the judges, the tabernacle was located in Shiloh, a city of Ephraim (Ja 18:10; Jg 18:31; 1 Sm 4:3). ***Delivered His strength into captivity:*** See 132:8; 1 Sm 4:3,21. God took His presence from the ark of the covenant when it was captured by the Philistines (1 Sm 4). After Israel recovered the ark, it was taken to Nob (1 Sm 21). It was later transferred to Gibeon (1 Kg 3:4).

78:65-72 ***The Lord awoke:*** This awakening for the salvation of Israel probably refers to the time of David's victories and Solomon's peace. This was a time when God intervened in order to spare Israel and bring her to her greatest days of glory during the reign of Solomon. ***Mount Zion ... sanctuary ... David:*** God's original plan was that the tabernacle be refurbished throughout the history of Israel. It was not His plan that Israel have a designated capital. Neither was it in His plan that there be an earthly king who would reign over the people. But the people cried out for a king, and the king, specifically David, wanted a capital to centralize the government of Israel. David also wanted a temple in order to centralize religious loyalty. None of these things were in the original plan of God when He gave the law at Mt. Sinai. They were only concessions. God allowed these things to come into the history of Israel in order that He might preserve a remnant of the people for the coming of the Messiah. Though Israel desired these additions to their nationhood and faith, God used them to accomplish His eternal plan. However, we must not forget that Israel was the means by which God would bring the Savior into the world. Israel was not the end of God's eternal purpose. It was for this reason that God continued with Israel, for He had a greater plan for man than the existence of national Israel.

Chapter 79
LAMENTING JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

The historical background of this passage is probably the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. It is a psalm of lament over the destruction of the city and the humbling of the people as a result of their conquest.

79:1-4 ***Laid Jerusalem in heaps:*** The picture of the destruction is deplorable. The army of Babylon took no time to bury dead bodies. They destroyed the city, tore down the walls of the city, and burned the temple, carrying away all the bronze, silver and gold of both the king's house and temple. It was a total devastation of both city and people.

79:5-13 ***Pour out Your wrath:*** The major part of the psalm is directed to God that He render vengeance on those who had devastated Israel, Jerusalem and the temple. Since the psalm would have been written by one in exile, the nature of the plea comes from one who seems to be impatient with God's response. A promise from the prophets of a remnant that would return to the land had already been made. With this knowledge of the promise of a remnant, the psalmist was asking how much longer would God wait before the conquering nations were punished. The Babylonian Empire was eventually overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire in 538 B.C. The king of the Medo-Persian Empire then allowed the Jews to return and rebuild both the city and temple (See comments Er & Ne). ***Former iniquities:*** The psalmist knew that repentance and forgiveness were necessary on the part of the remnant. He knew that repentance was necessary before all that he requested concerning the judgment of the enemies of Israel could be realized. ***Purge away:*** Literally, "make atonement for." Appointed to die: Save alive the sons of those who died in the destruction. ***Sevenfold:*** Initiate perfect or complete retribution. ***Show forth Your praise:*** Once the Jews returned from their captivity, they no longer sinned as their forefathers by running after idol gods. They remained true to the one God from the time of the Babylonian captivity unto this day.

Chapter 80
RESCUE FROM CALAMITY

In this psalm of lament over the calamity that had befallen God's people, the psalmist was assured that God would once again return and help His people. At the time this psalm was written, God's people were suffering because of their sins, and thus the psalmist knew that God would come again to rescue them as He did in former times.

80:1-7 God was the shepherd of Israel who led His sheep by the authority of His word (ch 23; Is 40:11). ***Turn us again:***

The use of the word "again" infers that this calamity was a series of calamities that Israel endured throughout their history as a result of their unfaithfulness. It also infers that the psalmist assumed that God would act in their present situation as He had responded in the past to deliver them. ***Against Your people who pray:*** The people were in prayer, but the psalmist was asking for answers to their prayers. When in the despair of calamity, it is easy to become impatient with God. But the believer must always understand that God allows us to suffer the consequences of our sin until we have learned our lesson. ***Our enemies laugh:*** Because of God's help in the past, Israel became somewhat arrogant, thinking that their victories over their enemies were the result of their efforts alone. But now the enemies of Israel had been victorious over them. Now that the enemies had victory over them, the enemies thus laughed at the former arrogance of Israel.

80:8-11 ***Vine out of Egypt:*** See Is 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jr 2:21; 12:10; Ez 17:5-10. ***Sea:*** The Mediterranean Sea. ***River:*** The Euphrates River. God had taken Israel out of Egyptian captivity and brought her into the land of promise. She was planted and nourished. She came to her full strength during the days of Solomon, whose kingdom influence, through trade, reached into other nations. But because of her apostasy to other gods, the vine was uprooted. First, the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C., and then the southern kingdom to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

80:12-19 ***Why have You then broken down her hedges:*** At the time, the vine of Israel was left unprotected. She had been uprooted by her enemies. There is complaint in the words of the psalmist as he compares the past protection that God offered Israel to their present desolation. His complaint came in a prayer that God return and make the nation strong for Himself. ***The son of man:*** This could be a Messianic reference to Jesus who is now at the right hand of God (Ep 1:20-23). But the prophets also at times referred to Israel as the son of God, for God had given birth to the nation (See Ex 4:22; Is 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jr 31:9). ***We will not return from You:*** This vow pointed to the promise that Israel made as a nation when in the captivity of Assyria and Babylon. The vow would have been broken if made during a previous captivity, for they returned to idolatrous worship after previous oppressions by foreign powers. But when they returned from Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., never again did they follow after idolatrous gods. They kept their vow.

Chapter 81
GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

This psalm was apparently used during many of the annual feasts, as the feast of Trumpets, Tabernacles and the day of atonement. It is a psalm that commemorates the memorials of how God had worked in the history of Israel.

81:1-5 ***Blow the trumpet:*** This was a law that God gave to Israel. It was the trumpet announcing freedom for Israel when they were about to leave their captivity in Egypt. ***New moon:*** Full moon. ***Language:*** They would have known the Egyptian language, for they had lived in Egypt for over 400 years. This was the sound (language) from God on Mt. Sinai.

81:6-10 The remaining verses of the psalm speak of Israel's deliverance to freedom from the captivity of Egypt. God removed the burden from their shoulders they bore in captivity (Ex 1:11-14). ***Place of thunder:*** Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:16-25). ***Waters of Meribah:*** See Ex 17:1-7. ***If you will hearken:*** If they would have been obedient to His word, then they would not have created gods after their own imaginations which led them to follow after the lusts of the flesh. They became materialistic after the nations around them, and thus created gods of lusts by which they satisfied themselves. God would have supplied all their necessities, but they greedily ran after the material gods of the Canaanites.

81:11-16 They refused to be loyal to God (See Ex 20:3). God thus gave them up because of their disobedience (Rm 1:24). If they had obeyed God, their history would have been completely different. Even those who hated the Lord would have been subjected to them. They would have had no need for food, for God would have supplied their needs from the rocks. Israel's history proves that the urge of man to follow after his own ways is strong.

Chapter 82
REBUKE OF UNJUST JUDGMENTS

Affirming that God was the Supreme One who judges without respect of persons, this is a psalm wherein the psalmist cries out for justice against wicked rulers. The existing authorities had perverted justice. They had declared their wickedness by rendering prejudicial judgments.

82:1-4 ***The gods:*** Bible students must keep in mind that when the word "gods" is used in the Bible, reference is to man determining his own laws that are often contrary to the will of God. The "gods" with which God competed was man who determined to go his own way. Once a religious man determines to go his own way, he will create a concept of a higher deity that condones his behavior. He has thus made a false god, one to whom he is subservient, and thus his conscience is clear according to the judgments of this god. The false gods of the Bible, therefore, were the creation of men. They existed only in the minds of misguided people. In this context, these were the gods against whom the only true God stood. Thus God was standing against men who had religiously decided to determine their own moral behavior. ***Judge unjustly:*** Compare 1 Sm 8:3; Is 1:17; 3:13-15; Jr 21:12; Am 5:12,15; Zc 8:9,10. The society had collapsed because there were no fair judgments, especially for the poor and orphans. One can know when a society has digressed by its unjust treatment of the unfortunate.

82:5-8 One of the primary purposes for judges was to guarantee the security of the unfortunate of society. At this time in the history of Israel, fair judges had passed from the land. The wickedness of the existing judges was manifested by their indifference to the plight of the defenseless. ***Children of the Most High:*** The judges had been given a place of respect in society, but they had abused their power. By their corrupt judgments they disqualified themselves. Because they had abused their function, their office would not protect them from dying as common men.

Chapter 83
CONFOUND THE ENEMIES

The historical events of this psalm could have taken place at many different times throughout Israel's history. On many occasions a confederation of enemies aligned themselves against Israel. One such confederation took place during the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Ch 20). Earlier times could have been during the period of the judges (See Jg 7 & 8).

83:1-4 The goal of the alliance of armies was to destroy the nation of Israel. Because they hated Israel, they hated the God of Israel. Any nation, or league of nations, therefore, that set themselves against the existence of Israel was fighting against God. God was working with Israel to bring the Savior into the world, and thus they were fighting against the eternal plan of redemption for mankind.

83:5-8 This alliance of nations was a mixture of different races. Some were descendants from Abraham (Edomites, Ishmaelites, Moabites), and some were aliens, and thus not from the heritage of Abraham. It was an uncommon league of nations that was doomed to fail. It was doomed to fail because, as independent nations, they had different agendas.

83:9-18 ***Sisera:*** See Jg 4:1 – 5:1. ***Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah:*** See Jg 7:1 – 8:13. The goal for which the psalmist prayed was to make them like those whom God had allowed Israel to conquer throughout their history. Since the confederation of armies manifested their hate of God by opposing God's people, the psalmist called on God to glorify Himself by giving Israel victory. This would be accomplished because the confederation was too great for Israel alone to defeat. But if God came to their aid and helped them to defeat such a great coalition of nations, then the nations would know that Israel had the help of their God. ***That they may seek Your name:*** In this imprecatory call for judgment on the nations, the psalmist had not forgotten the mission of Israel among the nations. Israel was a nation of priests to the nations of the world, and thus they were to minister the word of God to the nations. In his plea of this psalm, therefore, the psalmist was not simply pleading for the deliverance of Israel, but also that Israel evangelistically reach the nations with a true knowledge of God. ***LORD:*** This was the personal Israelite name for God, Yahweh.

Chapter 84
DESIRE FOR WORSHIP

This psalm may be associated with the pilgrimage to the tabernacle during the feast of Tabernacles. It is a psalm that expresses spiritual depth and a yearning for fellowship with God.

84:1-4 ***Tents:*** Or, the dwelling places of God. ***My soul longs ... faints:*** This is a psalm of deep conviction. The psalmist sought to be in any place where he could feel close to God. ***Sparrow ... swallow:*** As birds find a home, so the psalmist sought for a residence in the presence of God. Understanding the omnipresence of God helps one to feel close to God wherever he is. Christians today must understand that the requirement of God that the Jews present themselves before the tabernacle for the annual feast was for the purpose of maintaining unity in the nation. The Israelites knew that God was omnipresent, and thus could worship Him on their farms. But in order to maintain the unity of the nation, God commanded that they come together for national meetings.

84:5-8 ***In whose heart is the way:*** Those who have God in their hearts know the way to Zion. Because they had made the pilgrimage to Zion before, they knew the way. ***From strength to strength:*** The Israelites made an annual pilgrimage to present themselves before the Lord. This customary journey was a great trip for those who went. They knew the route to take and where to stay along the way. Though they had to go through waste lands to arrive at the tabernacle, the lands became a place of fountains. As they drew closer to the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle, they became more excited about the journey. It was a wonderful occasion in Jewish life.

84:9-12 ***Shield:*** Protection. ***Your anointed:*** This probably refers to the psalmist himself, as one of the pilgrims who made his way to the house of God. ***Doorkeeper:*** The most humble place in the house of God was better than a mansion with the wicked. ***Walk uprightly:*** God will provide for those who are His (See Rm 8:28). And for this reason, the one who depends on God will be blessed.

Chapter 85
REQUEST FOR MERCY

The historical setting of this psalm was probably when the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C. (See also 126; Ne 1:3; Hg 1:6-11; 2:15-19; see comments Er & Ne). It is a psalm of adoration in giving praise to God for His deliverance. With the praise of God, there is a prayer for spiritual revival among the people.

85:1-3 ***The captivity:*** The northern kingdom of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. and the southern kingdom in 586 B.C. A remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel returned to the promised land when Cyrus of Persia allowed the initial group of captives to return in 536 B.C. ***Forgiven:*** Because of their apostasy, Israel had been taken into captivity. Because of their repentance while in bondage, they were allowed to return.

85:4-7 The psalm turned from praise to prayer. When the initial captives returned, they were met with great opposition. The opposition was so great that they ceased rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (See comments of Er & Ne). God allowed them to return. However, though through God's grace they were allowed to return, this did not mean that they would be without trouble in accomplishing the goal of rebuilding the temple and the city.

85:8-13 The psalmist closed with hope that God would answer the petition to deliver them from the trouble they were experiencing in rebuilding the city. The condition for receiving God's blessing was that they not turn again to the folly of creating their own gods. When God's mercy and truth unite for the benefit of man, and man lives in righteousness and peace, the result is the restoration of joy among the people of God. People live in joy when there is hope for the future.

Chapter 86
PRAYER & TRUST

This psalm of lament is ascribed to David. The lament of

the psalm is based on the fact that God is good and ready to forgive all those who repentantly come to Him. He is great and full of compassion, and thus ready to help and comfort.

86:1-5 ***Poor and needy:*** The psalmist poured out his heart because he was in despair. His poverty was not economic, but spiritual in that he realized he needed the help of God in his life (See comments Mt 5:1-12). ***Committed:*** Because he had given his life to the Lord, he beseeched the Lord to work in his life. ***Daily:*** The believer's prayer and commitment to the Lord is not confined to a place or specific time during the week. It is daily and in every place, for one's life should be consumed for the Lord (Rm 12:1,2; 1 Th 5:17).

86:6-10 The hope of an answered prayer is based on the nature of who God is. Because all other gods are the result of the imagination of men, and thus do not exist outside the minds of men, then only God is able to respond to prayer. It was the psalmist who was crying out for help, for as a man he had accomplished the maximum that man could do to deliver himself. And since false gods are only the invention of men who use their minds to accomplish the best man can do, then one must seek that which is beyond man, that is, God (Compare 1 Co 8:5,6).

86:11-17 ***Unite my heart:*** The psalmist sought to focus his attention exclusively on God and His ways. He did not want to be tossed to and fro with the whims of fictitious beliefs that are the invention of men. He desired to dedicate the totality of his mind, heart, soul and strength to God alone (See Hs 10:2; Ph 3:13). ***Depths of Sheol:*** In the historical setting, David had been delivered from death by the ungodly. ***Full of compassion:*** Because of the compassionate nature of God, He is willing to help those who put their trust in Him. ***Turn to me:*** Knowing the nature of God, the psalmist was confident that God would extend His mercy to him. ***Sign:*** Not only does David ask for God to work in his life, he asked that the work be so evident that it would be a signal to his enemies that God was with him, and thus against them.

Chapter 87
PRIVILEGES OF NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP

This is an adoration of the spiritual Zion that is above. The historical setting is probably sometime after the Babylonian captivity. This is a universal psalm in the sense that peoples of all nations are included as participants in paying homage to God.

87:1-7 ***Foundation ... gates:*** Jerusalem is the earthly source of the metaphor that refers to heaven. What Jerusalem was to the Jewish faith, heaven is to all men. The gates of the city signified the strength of its walls against the enemy, as well as the place where the elders met with those who inquired counsel (See comments Mt 16:18,19). ***Spoken of you:*** Reference is to the praise of Gentile believers who looked to the God of heaven for protection and guidance (See comments Jn 10:16). ***Rahab and Babylon:*** The Gentiles will be included with those who have given themselves to the Lord. ***Rahab:*** A name that was used in Hebrew poetry for Egypt (Is 30:7). The names of places in this context are representative of Gentiles who are part of the heavenly Zion. ***This one was born there:*** The believing Gentiles whose spiritual heritage came out of God's city also have their citizenship in Zion. ***He registers the people:*** This psalm reaffirms the purpose and mission of Israel among the nations. They were a nation of priests, and thus had a responsibility to take the name of God to all nations (See comments Jh; see 1 Pt 2:5,9). They were situated in the most important world trade route at the time. They were between the northern people of the world and those of Africa to the south. Being situated in Palestine, they had the responsibility to teach the world about the one true and living God. Unfortunately, they compromised their faith with belief in the gods of the nations around them. They forsook their responsibility, and thus compromised their mission. It was not until after the Babylonian captivity that they assumed their God-ordained mission, which mission was reaffirmed by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 (Mk 16:15,16).

Chapter 88
DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

This is probably the greatest lament of all the psalms. It is a psalm similar to the plight of Job who felt that there was no end to his suffering. The psalmist seems to have a disease that he incurred in youth, but now resolved that it would lead to his death.

88:1-7 ***Full of troubles:*** The psalmist concluded that he was near death, and thus poured out this final lamentation concerning his plight. He had resigned himself to death. His friends had considered his disease to be fatal. The nature of the psalm, therefore, is a final lament to God in reference to the darkness of his life. ***Your waves:*** It would not be that God directly afflicted him with judgments. However, God has allowed him to suffer the plight of living in a world with a physical body that is subject to suffering. God is good, but He allows the natural processes of life to transpire. We live in a fallen world, one from which God will eventually deliver the righteous.

88:8-12 The psalmist's friends had forsaken him because of his disease. He had been shut up as one who was stricken with leprosy. In his desperate situation, he cried out on a daily basis to ask God for relief. And then, if he died, he questioned whether God would raise the dead. Though God's wonders cannot be made known by the dead, they will be made known when the dead arise in the future (See comments 1 Th 4:13-18).

88:13-18 The malady that he suffered was from his youth. Though he had no friends, he prayed that God not turn from him. At this time in his life he felt that all the agony that came with his malady had not climaxed with his impending death. What we would learn from the situation of the psalmist is that God will allow one to suffer in a disease throughout his life. We live in a world of pain and suffering. Sin came into the world through Adam, and thus much of our suffering is the result of man's sinful actions toward one another. However, in this case it was disease, not sin, that brought suffering into the life of the psalmist. It is in this imperfect environment for human habitation, therefore, that all men must live until they come into the new heaven and earth.

Chapter 89
GOD'S COVENANT & ISRAEL'S TRIALS

This last psalm of Book III is Messianic. The historical setting probably took place during the reign of Jehoiachin. There is in the background of the psalm a threat against the Davidic kings, a threat that would possibly bring this long dynasty of kings to an end.

89:1-4 The mercy and faithfulness of the Lord is the theme of the psalm. Upon the foundation of David, God built the Davidic dynasty. This fulfilled the promise and covenant that God had made with David. ***Your seed:*** The promise was that from David's earthly lineage there would be kings who came from the seedline of David (See genealogies of Mt 1; Lk 3). However, there is Messianic inference here in that David's seed would be established forever, which was through Jesus (At 2:30).

89:5-14 Beginning with emphasis on the created world being obedient to the will of God, the psalmist continued with focus on God's power over the strongest of nations who had succumbed to His power. ***The heavens:*** See 19:1-6. ***Assembly of the saints:*** God is feared among the assembly of His holy ones, which in this context would also include angelic beings. ***Feared:*** God is a God of love. However, because He is God He must be feared. We express reverence toward God in worship, but there must be fear, knowing that God can with a breath sweep the universe back into its nothingness that was before the creation. Approaching God without a sense of fear is arrogance on the part of man. Thus in one's fear of God, it is understood that there is obedience to His word. ***Rahab:*** Reference to Egypt (87:4). ***Tabor and Hermon:*** These two mountains are obvious in the range of mountains. God's power is evident in His creation (ch 8; Rm 1:20). ***Arm ... right hand:*** The metaphors (anthropomorphisms) emphasize the strength of God among all people of the world. No man is as strong as God. Because God is powerful over all things, He is the finality of justice and judgment among men. He is the final moral standard by which all will be judged.

89:15-18 ***Trumpet sound:*** This was the sound of the trumpet that called people to the festivals. It was a joyful sound as the trumpet calls were relayed from one trumpet to another throughout the land that all come to the feasts. ***Walk:*** Once called, the families would make the joyful journey to where the tabernacle was located in order to cerebrate the designated feasts. ***Horn:*** Power will be increased.

89:19-37 God had made a covenant with David that from his seed there would be kings in Israel. Peter referred to verses 3 & 4 in his address on Pentecost (At 2:30). Paul referred to verse 20 in his address to those in Antioch of Pisidia (At 13:22,23). Therefore, there are Messianic references in this context, though the immediate application was to Jehoiachin in his last days as king of Judah. ***David ... will be established:*** God anointed the heritage of David to be kings in Israel. No one could rightfully sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem if he were not of the lineage of David. The purpose of the genealogies of Jesus that are recorded in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 were to establish the fact that Jesus was of the lineage of David, and thus had a right to sit on the throne (authority) of David and reign as king, which reign Jesus is presently doing from heaven (See comments At 2:22-36). ***Sea:*** The Mediterranean Sea. ***Rivers:*** The Tigris and Euphrates. This would be an area that covered all the area to which the Israelites were taken into captivity. The area encompassed the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. ***Firstborn:*** See Jn 1:14; Rm 8:29. ***My covenant will stand fast:*** God established a sure and steadfast covenant with the seed of David. It was "forever" in the sense that Jesus was the last of David's seed who would reign as king. ***If his children forsake My law:*** The children could be disobedient to the will of God, but God would not forsake His promise to David. ***Nor suffer My faithfulness to fail:*** Jesus came into a world where the Jews had failed to keep the law of God. However, God still fulfilled His promise to set Jesus on the throne of David (See comments Jn 1:10-14). God established Jesus on the throne of David because He would not break His covenant with David. Because God was faithful to His covenant with David, Jesus is now reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). Jesus was established as king, not because of the obedient works of Israel, but because of the grace of God. ***As the moon:*** When God makes a covenant with man, He will not break His covenant (60:6; Hb 6:13-20). Though man may be disobedient to the will of God, God will be true to His promises as the moon is established in the heavens. The fulfillment of God's promises is based on grace, not the works of men.

89:38-45 ***Cast off and abhorred:*** This was a time in history when the southern kingdom of Israel, Judah, was being led into captivity, which captivity began with the initial captivity of Jehoiachin and ended with the final captivity in 586 B.C. Because of their disobedience, they were cast off into captivity. To those Jews who were experiencing these evening hours of the southern kingdom of Israel, it felt as if God had nullified His covenant and terminated the crown of David. Jehoiachin, of the seedline of David, was taken into captivity. The people were taken into captivity. The land was left to be plundered by traders who continually passed through the land. Thus Israel became a nation that was mocked by the world for they were taken out of the land. It was the end of Israel's habitation in the land, and thus, the people of God became a shame to the name of God among the nations.

89:46-52 ***How long, Lord:*** The people realized that they were being punished for their apostasy from God. They had evidently been listening to Jeremiah who said that they would go into captivity. Beginning with the captivity of Jehoiachin and ending with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., Israel would have to wait in Babylonian captivity for seventy years before they would return to the land. They had also been listening to the prophets who had prophesied that a remnant would return to the land. They thus pleaded with God that He fulfill His promise to return them to the land. ***Your former mercies:*** The psalmist turned from pleading the case of Israel that was based on the brevity of life, to pleading for God's remembrance of His mercy for Israel in the past. God did remember His former mercies, and thus He allowed them to return from captivity in order to fulfill His promise that there would be a remnant (See comments Er & Ne).

Book IV
(90:1 – 106:48)

Chapter 90
GOD'S ETERNALITY & MAN'S BREVITY

This is a magnificent psalm that expresses deep feelings concerning the brevity of man's life. Though the psalm was attributed to Moses, most Bible students have assigned it to a later time. Since the titles were not a part of the original psalms, we would conclude that a later scribe showed respect to Moses by assigning the thoughts of this psalm to the one who was the initial leader of the nation.

90:1-6 ***From everlasting:*** God has no beginning or ending. If He had, He would not be God. Since matter is not eternal, then the earth is not eternal as God. Earth is the result of an infinite God. ***Return, you children of men:*** Man is called again to return to the dust of the earth from which he came (Gn 3:19). ***Thousand years ... as yesterday:*** Time is not within the realm of God's existence. Only that which has been created is subject to time. As a part of creation, therefore, we cannot judge or conceive of God in reference to time (See 2 Pt 3:8). In contrast to the eternality of God, man is brief as the four-hour watch. We are cut down and wither away.

90:7-12 ***Our iniquities:*** This is the problem of man, for there is no one who does not sin (Rm 3:23). The brevity of our lives is worsened by the fact that we cannot live without sinning (Rm 3:9,10). And because we cannot live without sinning, we live under the judgment of God for our sins. This judgment robs us of any hope of eternality, and thus we are driven to the grace of God to keep us in His eternal presence (Compare 2 Th 1:6-9). ***Secret sins:*** Both God and man can see the sin that is carried out in behavior. But only God can know all the hidden attitudes of sin that are deep within the heart of man. Thus we pass our days under the judgment of God. ***As a tale:*** The length of our days is as a sighing breath. ***Threescore years and ten:*** This would be sixty years as a normal life-span, with an added ten more years by struggle. Regardless of the length of life, however, we are but a breath of wind in comparison to time. Because life is so short, it is necessary that we seek that which is eternal. Knowing, therefore, the judgment of God because of our sin, and the brevity of life, men should seek God to whom all are headed for judgment at the time of death (Hb 9:27).

90:13-17 Because God is eternal and man is finite and sinful, it is only natural that the psalmist would end this psalm with a plea for God's grace. ***How long?*** Or, how long will God take to return with mercy on man. ***Satisfy us early:*** The plea of the psalmist was that God return with His compassion early in life in order that life not be spent in vanities. The earlier one commits his life to God, the more he has of his life to give glory to God. ***Let Your work appear:*** This was a plea that the salvational work of God should be made known.

Chapter 91
SECURITY OF THE FAITHFUL

This psalm of adoration brings together a prayer and expression of trust in the Lord. It is a psalm that affirms that God is for His people, and thus His people can find security in Him.

91:1-8 The use of the first and second person pronouns are alternated throughout the psalm. The psalmist proclaimed his own personal faith, and then proclaimed comfort to the people. ***Secret place:*** This would be a place as a cave in which one would hide from his enemy. ***Shadow:*** Protection. ***Refuge ... fortress:*** Taken from the historical setting when there was an invading enemy, these two metaphors refer to those on the farms who took refuge in the fortified cities, and from there stood against the attack of the enemy. ***Under His wings:*** As chicks flee for safety under the wings of the hen, so we flee for the protection of God. ***Truth ... shield:*** When error is propagated about by false teachers, the truth of God's word will keep one from being tossed to and fro (See comments Ep 4:11-16). ***Terror by night:*** Dangers from men who would attack in the night. ***Pestilence:*** Dangers of disease.

91:9-16 If they put their trust in the Lord, they would be able to do what men normally would not be able to do, that is face lions and trample on snakes. ***Set his love on Me:*** See Jn 14:15; Rm 5:5; 1 Jn 4:18. Verses 14-16 are God's promise to those who have committed themselves to the Lord through love and obedience. God promises that He will set one in a place of protection. He will answer prayers. He will deliver the threatened out of trouble. He will be given a long life. These things God will do for those who have a personal acquaintance with God by their obedience to His will.

Chapter 92
GOD IS GOOD

This is an answer to the problem Job faced (See chs 37; 49; 74). The wicked may prosper, but they will eventually be brought down. Their final end is eternal destruction. When one realizes the final outcome of the wicked, then he praises God for His justice.

92:1-8 One is to give thanks to the Lord for all the good that He does in our lives. His goodness, therefore, is an occasion for praising Him. By what seems to be an array of stringed instruments, the psalmist brought a pleasant sound to his ears as he poured out his heart in praise to the Lord. ***Senseless ... fool:*** A senseless person does not think on things that are above this world. He does not perceive the work of God in the lives of righteous men because his mind is on carnal things. The fool is the morally corrupt person who cannot comprehend the work of God because his mind is focused on pleasing the lust of the flesh and following after those things that bring pride in life. Because the senseless and foolish focus on the things of their world, they will often prosper in life. However, that which they prosper will not take them into eternity and into the presence of God. Thus they are allowed by God to prosper, but in their prosperity they will face the judgment of eternal doom.

92:9-15 This is a brilliant closing to a psalm wherein it is realized by the righteous that God stands for them in any situation. In the midst of any trouble, the righteous must realize that the fame of the wicked is only temporary. But in reference to their fate, the righteous must realize that through the

justice of God, they will be made strong. Horn: Power (See Jb 39:9-12). ***Palm tree:*** Prosper. ***Cedar:*** Strength to endure. ***Fruit in old age:*** Not only will they live long, but their capacity to bear fruit will continue into their old age. Those who have given their lives to the Lord throughout their lives will live to an old age, being vigorous until the day they die. ***Rock:*** Stability.

Chapter 93
MAJESTY OF GOD

This psalm, and others (chs 47; 96-99), are psalms that magnify the kingdom reign of God over all things. The sovereignty of God is figuratively portrayed as the physical world unleashing its power.

93:1-5 If this psalm were written after the Babylonian captivity, then the emphasis was on God dressing Himself again with power among the nations. Through the restoration of Israel, God revealed His power over the nations by fulfilling the prophecies that He would restore a remnant of His people to their land. With the return of the remnant from exile, the throne of David was established and in waiting for the fulfillment of the Messiah to come. ***The floods:*** All the kingdom powers of the world could not defeat the eternal purpose of God through the restoration of Israel in view of the Messiah to come. The threat of the nations was only as the sound of ocean waves. ***Testimonies:*** God's will was established in that the fulfillment of prophecy concerning His eternal plan came about, regardless of what happened among the nations of the world. One very important truth is taken from this psalm. Regardless of the will of man, or the events that take place among the nations of the world, God carries out His plans. Men did not change His redemptive plan to bring the Savior into the world, nor His plan that the Savior ascend to the right hand of the Father to reign over all things (See comments Jn 1:11; Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2: 5-11).

Chapter 94
PLEA FOR VINDICATION

This psalm focuses on the inequities of life in reference to the hardships of the righteous that are the result of the wicked (See chs 37; 49; 72). Though the righteous suffer such inequities at the hands of the wicked, the psalmist concludes that the grace of God is sufficient to calm the anxieties that prevail in a world that is cursed with sin.

94:1-7 ***Vengeance:*** The psalmist complained, and thus called on God to render vengeance to those who had persecuted Israel (Dt 32:35; Rm 12:19). ***How long:*** The wicked will continue to persecute the people of God until Jesus comes. Though the wicked think that they will conceal their evil deeds from God, they will eventually reap the vengeance of God. ***Widow ... alien ... fatherless:*** The extremity of the wicked deeds of the ungodly is measured by the fact that they poured out their wickedness on the defenseless of society.

94:8-15 ***Take heed:*** After defining the wicked deeds of the ungodly, the psalmist turned to them with penetrating words, proclaiming that they would not accept the knowledge of their Creator. ***The Lord knows:*** God is omniscient, and thus knows all things. God is omnipresent, and thus is wherever we are. God is omnipotent, and thus able to bring judgment on the wicked wherever they are. ***Chasten:*** This world is a training ground for believers to prepare themselves for eternal dwelling (See comments Hb 12:5-11). ***Teach out of Your law:*** In order for one to know if his behavior is according to the will of God, he must know the will of God. And one can know the will of God only through His word. Our conscience can be our guide only if it is trained by the word of God. ***Not cast off His people:*** The righteous must find comfort in the fact that God will not forsake His people, though in a time of calamity, it may seem that God has forsaken us. But we must keep in mind that there is a final judgment day when the righteous will be delivered out of the oppression of the wicked, for the wicked will pass away (Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9).

94:16-23 ***Lord ... my help:*** Though no one would stand with the psalmist, he was assured that God was there for him. If the psalmist were a leader, possibly David, he knew that as a leader for God he had to stand alone. Godly leaders know that though they are alone from men, God is there with them. ***Anxious thoughts:*** In times of inner turmoil, believers must be assured that God is with them. It was not that those of faith had no anxieties. It is that their anxieties are calmed when they come to realize that God is for them (Rm 8:28). ***Throne of iniquity:*** Sometimes it seems that iniquity is enthroned in society, and thus righteous people have no chance. But God will bring down the unrighteous. He will deliver the oppressed. ***Mischief by law:*** The wicked ruler uses the law to carry out his wicked deeds against the people. Such a person cannot claim to be functioning on behalf of God. Only those who are self-deceived believe that they are carrying out the will of God when they are actually oppressing the righteous. This is often characteristic of false religions. ***Defense ... rock:*** One must find solace in the fact that God comes to the aid of the oppressed. When one realizes that God is the defender of the righteous, then upon the basis of this knowledge one can establish his faith. ***Cut them off:*** Knowing that the wicked will eventually come to an end gives confidence to the righteous. Though the wicked do not come to an end in this life, all wicked will come to an end at the time of the final judgment in the end (Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9).

Chapter 95
PRAISE OF GOD & WARNING AGAINST UNBELIEF

In Psalms 95–100 the common theme is adoration of God as the creator of all things. These are psalms of praise for God's covenant with Israel. The purpose of these psalms was to encourage joy on the part of Israel because of their unique relationship with God.

95:1-7 ***Joyful noise:*** This was a call to worship. In this case, it was a call to express one's worship through singing. ***King above all gods:*** It was not that there were other gods. These were gods that were imagined in the minds of men, and often represented with the making of some idol. In the context of this psalm on worship, therefore, the call to worship means putting out of one's mind concepts of idol gods. We cannot worship the true God with an imagined god in our minds. No

polytheist can faithfully worship the God of heaven. ***Deep places:*** We pour out ourselves in worship because we realize that God is everywhere and in control of all creation. ***Let us worship:*** These first verses define worship. Worship comes from our hearts and is offering adoration to God. There is no focus in worship on what man receives as a result of his worship. True worship is not given in order to get something. If there is a feeling of receiving something from worship, then the worship is divided between giving adoration to God while expecting something in return. Nowhere is worship defined in the Bible where the worshiper is to receive something in return for his bowing down to pay homage to the God of creation. Worship is never centered around the entertainment of the worshiper.

95:8-11 ***As in the rebellion:*** It is significant that in the context of a psalm on worship that the psalmist brings up a subject where the people thought about themselves. When coming out of Egyptian captivity, Israel experienced the power of God through the plagues on Egypt and the dividing of the Red Sea. They should have worshiped without thinking of themselves. But they did not. ***Tempted ... trial:*** The Hebrew word for "tempted" is Meribah, the place where Israel rebelled because they had no water (Ex 17:1-7; see Nm 20:1-13). The word for "trial" is Massah. Because they thought of themselves, they tempted and tested the patience of God by complaining about their circumstances. They doubted whether God could care for them, and thus were actually putting God on trial. ***Forty years:*** As a result of Israel's self-centeredness, they were condemned to wander for 40 years in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. ***Err in their heart:*** If one's heart is not right with God, then he cannot worship with a pure heart. ***They would not enter:*** As those who erred against God when they came out of Egypt, and thus were forbidden to enter the land of promise, so those who do not worship God with a pure heart today will not enter heaven (See comments Hb 3 & 4).

Chapter 96
THE JUST GOD

The words of this psalm are similar to 1 Chronicles 16:23-33. The psalm focuses on the deity of God and His sovereignty over all things. It is a call to all nations of the world to pay homage to the one true God of heaven.

96:1-6 ***A new song:*** See 33:3; 98:1; 149:1; Is 42:10. Emphasis is on the renewal of one's heart to praise God with a new song of worship. ***Declare His glory:*** Or, tell of His marvelous works. ***Gods ... idols:*** If one were to worship the true God, then he must recognize that man cannot invent gods in his mind to which he would pay homage. In the context of the theme of this psalm, the psalmist called for religious people of the nations to give up their imagined gods in order to come in worship of the true God of heaven (See 115:4-8; Is 40:18-23; 44:9-20). ***Lord made the heavens:*** Idol gods are made by the minds of men. But the true God made the minds of men.

96:7-13 ***Families of the people:*** God was not just the God of Israel. He was the God of all nations. When He chose Israel to be the nation through whom He would bring the Savior into the world, He did not reject the Gentiles of the world. ***Bring an offering:*** The bringing of an offering when coming to worship manifested that the worshiper was sincere. One cannot worship the God who gave us all things without giving back to Him in worship. Worship, therefore, is expressed through the giving of sacrifices. Worship is not accomplished by expecting something in return, whether material or spiritual. We do not give in worship in order to get something in return. False worship is offering in expectation of receiving something back from God. ***Tremble:*** God is love, but true worshipers realize that the One they worship created all things, and thus can snuff all things out of existence with the word of His mouth. ***Say ... the Lord reigns:*** God the Father now reigns over all things. When Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, He assumed kingdom reign over all things (See comments Ep 1:20-24; Ph 2:5-11). ***He is coming to judge:*** This verse looks to the end of time when Jesus will come in judgment of all things (See comments At 17:30,31; 1 Th 4:13-18; Rv 20:1-12).

Chapter 97
SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

This psalm seems to continue the thought of verse 13 of the preceding psalm. God will have a final judgment. For the righteous, the purpose of the judgment and its certainty is a reason for rejoicing. The righteous, therefore, see any judgment of God in time or at the end of time as a deliverance from the oppression of the wicked.

97:1-6 ***The Lord reigns:*** All people should rejoice because God is in control (ch 95; Hb 1:3). God's authority to judge all nations is based on the fact that only God can judge without prejudice. His judgment is always just. In order that God stand just, judgment must come on all people (Hb 9:27). The wicked must be held accountable for their crimes. ***The whole earth:*** God was not the God of Israel alone, but of all the world. ***Fire ... lightnings:*** These were signals of the presence of God (See Ex 19:9,16; 20:21; Dt 4:11; 5:23).

97:7-12 ***All you gods:*** Since false gods are simply the imagination of those who create spirit beings after their own thinking, the psalmist called on the minds of men to bow down before the true God. ***Rejoiced ... judgments:*** The historical setting of this psalm is not revealed. There was possibly a deliverance of Israel from oppression that gave rise to this psalm. God's people were vindicated from the oppression because of the just judgment of God. ***Love the Lord, hate evil:*** Love of the Lord is defined by one hating evil and obeying the commands of God (1 Jn 5:2). ***He preserves:*** Because God comes to the aid of His people, His people have an occasion for rejoicing (Compare Rm 8:28; 1 Co 10:13). They are preserved in their righteousness because they have responded positively to the commandments of God.

Chapter 98
PRAISE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The theme of this psalm is the mercy and salvation of the Lord. Because of the Lord's mercy and salvation, all His people, all nature, and all the nations are called on to sing praises to Him.

98:1-9 ***Hand ... arm:*** God's power was manifested through His mercy and deliverance of His people. ***Ends of the earth have seen the salvation:*** God did not deliver Israel for Israel's sake alone. He delivered them as a witness to other nations that He was working through Israel. ***Make a joyful noise:*** Because of what God has done, He should be praised. In every way He should be praised for His work among His people and the world. ***Sea ... floods:*** These metaphors bring the entire creation into the chorus of praise. ***Judge ... with equity:*** God judges without respect of persons (1 Pt 1:17). Because God so judges, the righteous can rejoice because they stand within the grace of God.

Chapter 99
THE FAITHFUL GOD

This is a psalm that magnifies the holiness of God. He is the sovereign God over all things, and thus inspires worship from those who recognize Him as King. He is faithful to those who worship Him because He alone is sovereign over all creation.

99:1-9 ***Cherubim:*** See Ex 25:18-22; 37:7-9. ***People tremble:*** When the people recognize the awesomeness of God, they tremble. He is a God of love. But since He is God, then men tremble. ***High above all:*** He is the incomprehensible God. He is not the product of the imagination of men, but men are the creation of His power. Therefore, God the creator is above all that He created. If He were the creation of the minds of men, then men could comprehend Him. ***Equity:*** He is the God of equality in judgment. He judges without respect of persons, judging the righteous on the foundation of His grace. He renders mercy to those who have obediently responded to His grace. ***He is holy:*** There is no darkness in God (1 Jn 1:5). ***He answered:*** Because they were obedient to His commandments, God answered the prayers of Moses, Aaron and Samuel. The prayers of the obedient are answered. ***Cloudy pillar:*** See Ex 14:19,20; Nm 12:5. ***Vengeance:*** Because of their disobedient deeds, the Israelites were condemned to forty years of wandering in the wilderness. However, after they as a nation had paid the price for their rebellion, they were allowed to enter into the land of promise. However, those who were twenty years of age and older at the time of the rebellion, were not allowed to enter, but died in the wilderness.

Chapter 100
ALL NATIONS PRAISE GOD

This is a psalm of thanksgiving exalting the true God of Israel. It is a call on all nations to recognize and praise the one God of heaven.

100:1-5 ***Joyful ... all you lands:*** When studying the history of Israel in the Old Testament, one must not forget that God had a special covenant with Israel for Messianic reasons. However, He did not cease being the God of all nations. Throughout the book of Psalms, therefore, there is a call for all nations to worship God. ***Gates:*** The strength of His protection. ***Courts:*** The spiritual realm of His glory. Thanksgiving: Reference to the thank offering. ***Everlasting:*** Here, as well as in most passages, the word "everlasting" or "forever" is used in reference to surety, not length of time. In this context, reference was to the certainty of God's mercy, emphasizing the fact that the obedient remain within the security of God's mercy. ***Truth:*** We can depend on the faithfulness of God.

Chapter 101
SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY

As a psalm of David, David set forth his vision for maintaining his court during his reign. He would conduct himself with dignity, as well as maintain a court that was void of evildoers. This is a beautiful psalm for making a personal comment to live righteously before God.

101:1-8 ***Mercy and justice:*** Since God had been merciful and just with him, David in turn wanted to be merciful and just with others (See comments Js 2:13). ***Walk within my house:*** He promised to live a righteous example before his family. ***Wicked thing:*** David promised that he would not set before himself that which was wicked. He would not watch that which glorified sin. ***Those who turn aside:*** He would not allow his loyalty to God to be compromised by friends who fell away from God. He would not associate with apostates. ***Not know a wicked person:*** He would maintain companions who were righteous. He would stay away from evil companions. ***Whoever secretly slanders:*** He would reject those who maliciously spoke to him about others. He knew that his royal court would quickly be destroyed by allowing such people to exist, and thus he committed to God that He would not allow slanderous people to exist within his governing counsel. ***Haughty ... arrogant:*** He promised that he would associate with humble people, not those who played politics in order to gain his favor as the king of Israel. ***Faithful:*** He would focus on the righteous, and thus encourage them to be his friends. ***Works deceit:*** He would reject from his court those who deceive in order to gain favor or promote their agenda. ***Destroy all the wicked:*** He would first destroy the wicked in order that their influence not pollute the people. This would include purging Jerusalem of those who worked evil.

Chapter 102
PRAYER FOR MERCY

The historical setting of this psalm was probably the time when the Jews were in exile. The psalmist mourned over the plight of his being away from his homeland. He yearned for the land that was given to the fathers, and was confident that God had not forsaken His people.

102:1-11 ***Hear my prayer:*** The psalmist cried out to the Lord while in misery. The intensity of his prayer was measured by the depth of his calamity. His misery was so great that he asked God to give a quick answer to his deliverance from the situation in which he lived. ***Consumed like smoke:*** His existence was as smoke that vanished into the sky. ***Burned as a hearth:*** His life was inflamed on the fire of trials. ***Forget to eat my bread:*** It seems that the situation in which he was caused him to have no appetite. His body had given up food, and thus was withering away. Hunger pains had already passed and he was in a state of starvation. ***Bones cleave:*** He was skin and bones. ***Pelican ... Owl:*** He was as lone birds

trying to survive. ***Ashes ... tears:*** Ashes were in his food and tears fell into his drink. ***Cast me down:*** He felt that he was not in favor with God. ***Your remembrance:*** The psalmist's plea was that God remember the plight in which he was. Calling on God to remember his situation was a call that God do something about his situation. God had not forgotten. Here, as well as in other texts that call on God to remember, are calls for God to take action.

102:12-22 The psalmist now focused on the bright side of his relationship with God. ***Endure ... remembrance:*** God endures with those with whom He works, and thus He does not forget His relationship with the faithful. ***Mercy on Zion:*** Jerusalem will be remembered in that God would fulfill His promise that a remnant return to the city. ***The set time:*** God had condemned them to 70 years of captivity (Jr 29:10; Dn 9:2). That time had been fulfilled by the time this psalm was written. ***The Lord will build up Zion:*** See comments Ezra & Nehemiah. Because Jerusalem was rebuilt by the returned Jews, the nations realized again that God was working with His people. ***Written for future generations:*** When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, it was the fulfillment of prophecy that they would return to rebuild. ***Sanctuary ... heaven:*** God does not dwell in buildings and temples made by the hands of men. His dwelling place is the sanctuary of a heavenly realm. If we feel that God dwells in a particular place, then we have created a concept of God that is less than His omnipresence. ***Groaning of the prisoner:*** The psalmist groaned in Babylonian captivity, as Nehemiah wept over the devastation of the city. God listened to the groaning in prayer and responded to allow the Jews to return to the promised land. As a result, His people were again gathered out of the nations in order to serve God. ***The kingdoms:*** Not only Israel, but the time would come when all the kingdoms would be gathered to serve the Lord (See Is 2:1-4; Mc 4:1,2; Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15,16).

102:23-28 The psalmist turned to focus on the brevity of his life in comparison to the longevity of God's creation. He requested that God not allow him to die. He possibly did not want to die until he saw the fulfillment of the prophecies that Israel would return from captivity. ***They will perish:*** Verses 25-27 are quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12 with reference to Jesus who is unchangeable (See Hb 13:8). In this context the meaning is that God would not change from His promises that He had made concerning the restoration of His people. Thus God's servants would continue throughout many generations to come.

Chapter 103
PRAISE GOD FOR HIS MERCY

This is a psalm of praise and adoration of God. It is a psalm of thanksgiving for God's care that was extended beyond the nation of Israel. The praises of the psalm exalt the redemptive work of God that reaches to all people.

103:1-5 ***All His benefits:*** As a psalm of adoration, the psalmist poured out his thanksgiving to God for the benefits for those who had committed their lives to Him: (1) God's people are forgiven of their sins. (2) He heals the soul that has been wounded by sin. (3) He saves His people from destruction that comes from sin. (4) He exalts His children by pouring out grace and mercy on them. (5) He satisfies His children with good things. ***Your youth:*** As an eagle that soars to great heights, so the result of God providing for the youth is that they too will have strength and longevity of life.

103:6-14 ***His ways:*** We have an inspired record of God's dealings with the nation of Israel in order to understand how gracious God can be with our rebellion. God was patient with Israel. He was forgiving. He cared for them as a father lovingly cares for his children. ***Not always reprimand:*** Though there were times when His children had to be disciplined, God would not continually do so day after day. Because of His forgiveness and mercy, He does not punish His people with what they deserve for their sins. Their rebellion would justly deserve death, but because of His mercy, He only disciplines. ***We are dust:*** God knows that we were created out of that to which all men return. Except for the spirit of man that God created, all men of this material world will return in a short time to the dust of the earth.

103:15-18 The life of man is brief, and withers away as the flowers of the field. But God's mercy continues forever. It continues throughout the generations of those who have committed themselves to be obedient to the laws of the covenant that He has established with them.

103:19-22 ***Rules over all:*** Israel was under the kingdom reign of the Father, but Israel was not all the kingdom of God. All nations of the world composed the territory of the sovereignty of the Father. ***Angels:*** Even angels were a part of the kingdom reign of the Father before Jesus assumed this authority when He ascended to the right hand of the Father (See comments Ep 1:20-24; 1 Pt 3:22).

Chapter 104
GOD CARES FOR HIS WORKS

As the previous chapter, this is a psalm of adoration and worship. The theme of the psalm is adoration of God for His majestic work in creation.

104:1-9 This psalm begins with praise of God for His majesty, which majesty was manifested in the power by which He created the world. ***He lays the beams:*** As a builder constructs a building, so the Creator constructed the world out of the materials that He had created from nothing. He first laid the foundations, and then created all living things. ***Not be removed forever:*** The psalmist used the word "forever" with its common meaning, that is with emphasis on being firmly established, and thus continuing in existence. To be firmly established, or established with certainty, means longevity, but the emphasis is that one not be dispossessed or moved (Compare 2 Pt 3:10-13). ***His angels:*** Or, his ministering spirits (Hb 1:7). ***At Your rebuke:*** By the word of God the world was brought into existence and formed (Gn 1:9,10). ***To cover the earth:*** The face of the earth that we see today is the result of two great works of God. The first was the initial creation of the world where God separated the water from the dry land. The second was during the time of Noah when the earth was again completely resurfaced by a great flood of waters. The

waters that went to and fro during the flood of Noah's day produced multiple layers of strata. The tectonic activity of the waters upon the face of the whole earth resurfaced the earth, pushing up great mountains and creating the seas that we witness today. God once again set the shorelines of the world in order that the flood waters not cover the face of the earth as they did during the time of the flood.

104:10-23 God created the best of all possible environments in which a truly free-moral individual could dwell. All that was necessary for man to live out his life was provided in the created world. Since the purpose of this world is to prepare believers for eternal dwelling, then we assume that the environment which God created was perfect for the sustenance of humans. Once the world has accomplished its purpose, then there will be no more need for it as it now exists. That which was created to nourish man in his temporal body will then be done away. Though this world has been flawed by the sin of man through the fall of Adam, we must not assume that this world as it now exists was created for the purpose of being the eternal habitation of man (See comments 2 Pt 3).

104:24-30 The work of God in His creation has not ceased (Jn 5:17; Cl 1:17). There is a sustaining influence by the power of God in the creation, which power is now under the control of Jesus (Hb 1:3). Not only does the created life of the world manifest the wisdom of God, it also manifests His presence (See ch 8; Rm 1:20). God left His witness in the created world, and thus those who behold its wonders must conclude that there was a Designer behind that which was designed. The honest inquirer, therefore, must conclude the existence of something greater than the world. And this One who exists must stand independent from the world that He created (See comments At 17:24-31).

104:31-35 The glory of God has been manifested through the existence of that which He created (ch 8). What He created was good (Gn 1:31). It was good for the existence of both man and animals. God is active in His creation. He did not create the world and then forsake His creation for some distant existence far removed from the life that He brought into existence. God is transcendent. He participates in the physical world of His creation by maintaining its existence (Hb 1:3). He participates in the life of His creation in that He continually provides for the animals and man who live with the food that is produced by the natural environment that He upholds (Hb 1:3). God is active in His creation, and thus is to be thanked through praise for His abiding care.

Chapter 105
GOD WORKS FOR HIS PEOPLE

This is a historical psalm (See also chs 78; 107; 114; 136). The psalm contrasts the failure of the people to live according to the will of God with the faithfulness and longsuffering of God to preserve them as a nation.

105:1-6 See 1 Ch 15:1-22. In the procession to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, David composed this psalm in order to call on all Israel to give glory to God.

105:7-15 This poetical history of Israel begins with Abraham and continues to the time when Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity. ***Covenant that He made with Abraham:*** Throughout the history of Israel, God's covenant with Abraham was the foundation upon which He preserved Israel (See Gn 12:1-3). Because Abraham was faithful, God promised him that in his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed. This blessing was Jesus, the Savior who came into the world from the nation of Israel. Throughout their years of rebellion, therefore, God was patient with Israel in order to maintain the covenant He had made with Abraham to bring the Messiah into the world from his seed (See At 13:16-34; Rm 2:28,29; 4:12-17; Gl 3–4; Hb 10:15-22). ***Foreigners:*** The fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, were only strangers in the land that would later be given to their descendants. ***Rebuked kings:*** For the sake of the preservation of the fathers, God rebuked the pagan kings of their day who sought to be their enemies (Gn 12:14-20; 20:1-16; 26:6-11). ***My prophets:*** The patriarchs were the spokesmen for God (Hb 1:1,2).

105:16-22 See Gn 37–47. ***Famine in the land:*** God caused a famine in the land of Canaan, the place where Jacob and his family were dwelling. He caused the famine in order to move Jacob and his family into the land of Egypt. It was God's plan to develop the nation of Israel in the land of Egypt. In order to do this, He sent Joseph before Jacob into the land in order to gain the favor of the Egyptians (Gn 45:5). God used the jealousy of the brothers of Joseph in order to have him sold into Egypt, and subsequently become a powerful leader who later received his father and brothers into Egypt. God often uses the sins of men in order to bring about His purposes.

105:23-36 The historical setting of these verses begins with Jacob and his family going into Egypt. It concludes with the exodus of Israel from Egypt. ***He increased His people:*** The purpose for God sending Jacob into Egypt was to build a nation. They became so large in number as a nation that the Egyptians came to fear them because of their numbers. ***Land of Ham:*** This was a poetical description of Egypt (78:51; Gn 10:6). ***Hate His people:*** The Egyptians hardened their hearts against the Israelites, and subsequently Pharaoh's heart was hardened against them (Ex 8:15,32; 9:34). ***Signs ... wonders:*** See Ex 7–12. ***They did not rebel against His words:*** Once all the plagues had taken place, Pharaoh and the Egyptians obeyed the word of Moses and Aaron and let the people of Israel go free. The miraculous plagues that God unleashed on Egypt manifested that He was the true God, the God who was greater than the imagined gods that the Egyptians had created after their own image. The contest between Moses and Pharaoh, therefore, was a contest between the God of heaven who was represented by Moses and the strong will of Pharaoh. The more God worked through the plagues, the more stubborn (hardened) Pharaoh became. Thus God hardened Pharaoh by presenting an opportunity for him to become more stubborn in allowing Israel to go free. In the end, however, the last plague, the death of the firstborn, broke Pharaoh and the will of the Egyptians. It was then that they asked the Israelites to leave their land.

105:37-45 ***With silver and gold:*** When they left Egypt, the people of Egypt gave them silver and gold. In receiving the gifts from the Egyptians, the Israelites plundered Egypt. ***Not***

one feeble person: No one was too weak that he could not keep up with the group who left Egypt. ***He remembered His holy promise and Abraham:*** It was not that God had forgotten what He had promised to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). When it is stated that God remembered, it means that God took action to carry out the promises of His covenants. In this case, Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity because God had made a promise to Abraham. He had promised that He would create of his seed a great nation and give this nation a land of their own. ***Observe His statutes:*** The land was given to Israel in fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham. It was also given to them in order that they obey the law of the covenant that He established with the nation at Mt. Sinai.

Chapter 106
GOD WORKS REGARDLESS OF REBELLION

In this historical psalm the psalmist focused on Israel's lapses into sin, and God's subsequent mercy to bring them through discipline back to faithfulness. Psalm 105 focused on the goodness of God to bring Israel to the land. This psalm focuses on the sin problem of Israel because of their rebellious nature and the influence of the nations that they failed to drive from the land. The psalm was composed during the Babylonian captivity, and in hope of returning to the land of promise.

106:1-6 The psalm begins, first with thanksgiving to God, and then a confession that their fathers had sinned. ***Mighty acts:*** The confession was based on the miraculous deeds that God had done throughout their history. Because God had worked so wonderfully in their history, they had no excuse for their rebellion.

106:7-12 The psalmist confessed seven sins of Israel that were committed from the time Israel left Egyptian captivity to the time the nation entered the land of promise. The first was that they rebelled at the Red Sea (Ex 14:10-12). They rebelled regardless of God's mercy that He had manifested to them by delivering them out of the hand of Pharaoh (See Ex 14:13 – 15:22).

106:13-15 Their second sin was their complaint to Moses that they did not have water and food (Ex 15:23 – 17:7). Because they had a bondage mentality, and were spoiled by their good life in the land of Goshen, they would not trust in God, but in their own selves. And because they did not know how to survive in the wilderness, they complained against Moses for leading them into the wilderness. ***Leanness into their soul:*** God gave them the water and food. However, because they had focused so much on the fleshly side of life, their soul starved.

106:16-18 See Nm 16. Their third sin was to question God's appointed authority among the people. This was an insurrection led by Dathan, Abiram and Korah. The leadership of Moses and Aaron led these men to envy their position, and thus they led some of the Israelites against their God-ordained leadership among the people. God destroyed them and their families because of their rebellion against God's men.

106:19-23 See Ex 32; Dt 9:8-29. Their fourth sin in the wilderness was idolatry. When they arrived at Horeb (Mt. Sinai), they sought to manifest the glory of God in a golden calf idol. They had been influenced by the idolatry of Egypt (the land of Ham), and thus turned their thinking to something that they had created after their own imagination. If Moses had not interceded for them on this occasion, God would have destroyed the entire nation of Israel (Ex 32:31-35). He would have then started another nation through the seed of Moses. ***In the breach:*** When a wall was breached, an enemy could then attack the inhabitants of a city through the breach. In a figurative manner, Moses, as a brave leader, stood in the breach in order to spare Israel from God's destruction.

106:24-27 See Nm 13:1 – 14:45. Their fifth sin was that they failed to go up immediately and take the land of promise. Unfortunately, they devised a plan to send spies into the land, which spies upon their return gave a discouraging report (See comments Dt 1:19-46). Because they did not believe that God would fight for them in order to take the land, they disobeyed His command that they go up immediately and take the land. As a result, they were not allowed to enter in because of unbelief (Hb 3:7-19). Because they did not go up immediately and take the land, all those from twenty years of age and older died during the next 38 years of wilderness wandering. It was a faithless generation that God did not want entering into the land of promise, for they would influence generations to come.

106:28-31 See Nm 25:1-18. The sixth sin of Israel was their idolatry at Baal-peor. ***Baal:*** This was a generic term for the Canaanite fertility god. ***Peor:*** This was possibly a hill where the idols of the Moabite god were worshiped (Nm 23:28). Worship of the Canaanite god included fornication by which one would join himself to the god through acts of fornication (See comments 1 Co 6:13-20). It was at Peor that many in Israel gave themselves to the Canaanite god, and thus God sent a plague among the people. The plague was stopped only when Phinehas took action (Nm 25:6-9). ***Accounted to him for righteousness:*** See Nm 25:12,13.

106:32,33 See Nm 20:1-13. The seventh sin that Israel committed in the wilderness was their unbelief at Meribah. The mention of this sin here is not in the chronological order in which it occurred in the history of Israel. It is possibly placed last here in order to point out the underlying problem that continually plagued Israel, that is, their lack of trust in God. The incident also resulted in Moses being rejected from entrance into the promised land. Though Moses personally disobeyed God at Meribah, and thus had to live with the consequence for his own disobedient actions, Israel had driven him to strike the rock out of frustration. In his frustration with the unbelief of the people, he struck the rock in order to bring forth water. The psalmist possibly wanted his audience to take some accountability for Moses not being allowed to enter the land. Because of their rebellious unbelief and lack of trust in God they drove Moses to disobey God.

106:34-39 ***Mingled among the nations:*** God had commanded that Israel destroy the cultures within the promised land because the nations had gone beyond the point of moral repentance. However, they did not eradicate all the cultures of the land, and subsequently, through trade and social inter-

change, Israelites married Canaanite people. Being led by their kings as Solomon, they married and adopted the religious culture of those they married. Their apostasy went to the point of human sacrifices, which practice was carried out by the Canaanites when Israel first entered the land (See Dt 12:31; 19:9,10; 2 Ch 33:5,6; Ez 16:20,21; 20:31).

106:40-46 Throughout the history of Israel, especially the history recorded in the book of Judges, Israel went through a cycle of sin and repentance. The nation would sin, God would afflict them, and they would subsequently repent. However, this cycle of sin and repentance came to a conclusion when God finally determined that they were bent on going after idolatrous religious behavior. Israel was then sent into captivity. The northern kingdom first went into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. The southern kingdom went into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.

106:47,48 The last two verses are a closing doxology. They are a prayer that God will gather His people who were dispersed among the nations through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. A remnant of all twelve tribes would eventually come from the nations in order to praise the Lord again in the land of promise. The first exiles to return to the land came upon the authority of King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire who allowed the captives to return to their homelands (See comments Er & Ne).

Book V
(107:1 – 150:6)

Chapter 107
GOD DELIVERS FROM TROUBLE

This psalm of adoration and worship describes the many situations of human life and how God delivers from troubling situations. One theme that prevails throughout the psalm is the transcendence of God. When we are in situations of distress, and then pray to God for help, He will come to our aid. This is a psalm that confirms the fact that God answers our prayers.

107:1-9 ***Gathered them out of the lands:*** We assume that the historical setting of this psalm is the gathering of the remnant of Israel from all nations to which they had been scattered in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. By the ordinance of the Medo-Persian King Cyrus, the first captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem in 536 B.C. It was a glorious occasion, the fulfillment of prophecy, and a reaffirmation to the Jews that God was still working through them in order to bring the Messiah into the world. ***Redeemed of the Lord:*** The remnant of Israel was rescued out of the lands of their captivity. That which they could not do on their own, God did through Cyrus, the king of the Medo-Persian Empire (See comments Er & Ne). The remnant, therefore, were the redeemed ones of the Lord. ***Desert region:*** Because they were discriminated against while in captivity, the Jews were given the worst of the lands in the region of their captors.

107:10-15 ***Because they rebelled:*** The Jews found themselves in captivity because they had rebelled against the will of God while in the land of Palestine. ***Labor***: They were subjected to being laborers in the land of their captors. ***Praise the Lord for His goodness:*** God should be praised because we recognize and have partaken of His grace (See comments 2 Co 4:15).

107:16-21 ***Broken the gates:*** In returning the captives from bondage, God freed them from the captivity of social bondage (Is 45:2). ***Gates of death:*** In a metaphorical sense, their loathing of spiritual food brought them to the brink of spiritual death (See Rm 6:23). Their captivity took them from loathing to longing for spiritual food. ***Sent His word:*** The power to heal the spirit of the people was the pronouncement that God had set them free. In the broader meaning, it is always the word of God that is able to heal spiritually those who seek God (See comments Hb 4:12). God's word directs those who are longing for spiritual healing. If there is prophecy in verse 20, then the sending of Jesus, the Word, healed the spiritually dead and delivered out of destruction all those who were dead in sin (Jn 1:1-14; 2 Th 1:6-9; compare Ps 105:19; Is 9:8; 55:11).

107:22-31 Because of the Lord's protection, men should offer thank offerings for His deliverances (Lv 7:11-15; 22:29,30; 2 Co 4:15). ***Down to the sea:*** The sea was viewed to be at a lower elevation because men had to go down from the land or mountains to board the ships on the sea. ***Wit's end:*** When men come to the end of delivering themselves by all human resources, then God must come to their aid. In this case, men cannot control the natural forces of nature. Therefore, God must calm the seas.

107:32-43 It was because of the sin of Israel that God brought drought over the land. When they returned from captivity in repentance, God made the land fruitful. ***Princes ... poor:*** All are subject to the judgments of God. ***Observe these things:*** Believers must be perceptive to the work of God in the world. Israel had a written record of their history. They could read how God worked with them through blessings and cursings. We have the same record today in order that we might understand how God continues to work in the world (See comments Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11).

Chapter 108
PRAISE & PRAYER FOR VICTORY

What is unique about this psalm is that it seems to be the composition of material from two other psalms, specifically Psalm 57:7-11 and 60:5-12. Because of this, we conclude that the psalms were originally previous collections of various psalms that were later brought together into the one collection that we have in our Bibles today.

108:1-6 See 57:7-11. The psalmist gave adoration to the Lord in order that he be delivered. The conclusion is that God's deliverance in our lives comes only when we pour out ourselves in worship to Him. God works for His people as long as His people identify themselves by their worship of His greatness.

108:7-13 See 60:5-12. God was the one who gave victory to Israel over their enemies. Historically, the enemies of Israel were trained in warfare. Their existence was based on the fact that they were militarily strong. But Israel had come out of

Egyptian captivity as a nation of shepherds and farmers. They had no training in warfare. Nevertheless, through the help of God working in each soldier of Israel, they were able to defeat great armies that were warrior nations. They could do this only because God worked to strengthen each Israelite soldier. God helped them in their time of conflict with hostile nations, and they performed valiantly.

Chapter 109
GOD AVENGES HIS ENEMIES

This is a strong imprecatory psalm that was written concerning those who would set themselves against God's anointed king. The psalmist, however, did not view the attacks of his enemies as personal attacks against himself. Because David knew that he was the anointed of God, he viewed the attacks as attacks against God. And thus he calls on God to deal with those who would attack God, the one who anointed him as king over Israel.

109:1-5 ***Mouth of the wicked:*** The background for this imprecatory psalm were slanderous words against the king, not swords in conflict. The psalmist was being attacked with lies that were propagated by those who sought to destroy the king's credibility. ***Return for my love:*** All God's leaders must accept this fate. Some of those who are led to do that which is right before God, will turn on their leaders with slanderous words. They do this because rebellious men seek to seize power and control. ***Give myself to prayer:*** As Jesus prayed for forgiveness from the cross for those who ignorantly crucified Him, so the true leader of God will pray for those who slanderously attack the king. ***Evil for good:*** When sincere leaders seek to serve because of the goodness of their hearts, they are often rewarded with attacks by those who are moved with envy and a thirst for power. Sometimes people simply have a spirit of rebellion that hinders them from following others who seek to lead people closer to God.

109:6-20 David turned in this psalm to call God to his aid by bringing judgment on those who slanderously attacked him. ***Prayer become sin:*** Because of his slanderous attacks against the righteous leader, the prayers of the slanderous person were sinful in that they were spoken from an ungodly heart. ***Let him be condemned:*** Since the pronoun changes from "they" to "him," it may be that the psalmist turned from the group that was against him, to their specific leader. In this case he was a wicked person who was driven by evil desires. Thus the psalmist requested that one of the same character, a perverse accuser, be his adviser. ***Office:*** See At 1:20. Throughout this section of the text, the psalmist called down the judgment of God on the particular wicked person in mind. He called for harsh indictments against the individual simply because the person in mind had dealt wickedly with the king. He thus called on the wicked person to receive at least the same judgments that he had launched against the psalmist. No mercy should be shown, either to him or his family. The call was that his family heritage become extinct, which thing was a serious judgment in reference to the Jews who considered one's family heritage of great value. The intensity of this imprecatory psalm should be a warning to those who would use their slanderous mouths to attack God's work through His leaders. Since we consider this psalm inspired by the Spirit of God, then we conclude that God has little regard for those who use slander in order to exalt themselves over others.

109:21-27 ***For Your name's sake:*** God blesses those who sincerely work for His glory because He seeks to bring glory to His name. ***Fasting:*** Because of the ordeal through which the psalmist was going, he had spent much time in fasting. He had spent so much time in fasting that he was physically weak. The intensity of his request for deliverance was manifested by his fasting. ***Reproach ... shake their heads:*** As Job in the depths of his calamity, the society saw him as someone to be scorned. As they passed by, they nodded their heads in condoning the fate of the oppressed. ***That they may know:*** The psalmist's request was that his deliverance be so evident that all would conclude that God delivered him.

109:28-31 The psalmist relinquished his fate to his enemies. They could continue to curse, but he sought the blessings that came from the Lord. He closed the psalm with a plea for vindication by the mercy of God. Though his enemies be left in shame, he would have occasion to rejoice because of God's deliverance. ***I will greatly praise the Lord:*** The integrity of the psalmist is brought out in these final words. Regardless of the oppression and slander of enemies, he would not curse God and die. The fact that he praised God in a time of calamity manifested that he was righteous before God. It sometimes takes calamity in our lives in order to determine if we have a godly heart. If the calamity results from being slandered, one should do as the psalmist, that is, turn the matter over to God, and then continue praising God. Those who are innocent should not allow slander to spark ungodly responses.

Chapter 110
SOVEREIGNTY OF THE KING

This is the most comprehensive Messianic psalm of all the psalms. It is quoted 22 times in the New Testament in reference to Jesus and His kingdom reign. We would thus understand the psalm as purely prophetic in reference to the Messiah who was to come. It is a very important psalm concerning the coming King who would sit on David's throne. David prophesied that the "Lord" (the Son) should sit at the right hand of the "Lord" (the Father) until all enemies be subjected to His power (vs 1). The Lord to which reference is made in this prophecy would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (110:4). This Lord would judge among the nations (110:6). This amazing psalm pictures the nature and work of the coming King. Hebrews 1:13 is a quotation of verse 1. The Hebrew writer, as well as other New Testament writers, applied the prophecy of this psalm to Jesus (See Mt 22:44; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42). In Acts 2:34,35, Peter stated that the prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. At the time of Peter's statement in Acts 2, Jesus was at the right hand of God. Paul affirmed that Jesus would reign there until the last enemy, which is death, is destroyed (1 Co 15:25). All emphasis of kingdom reign that is interpreted from Psalm 110 is now characteristic of the present reign of Jesus. He has been exalted to the right hand of the Father. He has been given all kingly reign. David prophesied

that the Lord would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (110:4). Hebrews 7 states that Jesus is now a priest. He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Jesus is now a priest and king upon the throne of David.

110:1-7 See Mt 22:44; 26:64; Mk 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Lk 20:42,43; 22:69; At 2:34; 1 Co 15:25; Ep 1:20; Cl 3:1; Hb 1:3,13; 10:12,13; 12:2. ***The Lord:*** Hebrew, *Adonai*. ***My Lord:*** *Yahweh*. ***Footstool:*** In this prophecy, David said that his Lord would sit at the right hand of the Father until all the enemies of his Lord (Jesus) would be subdued (See comments 1 Co 15:20-28; Hb 2:8). ***Rod:*** Or, "mighty scepter." ***Midst of Your enemies:*** Jesus came to Israel, but not everyone of Israel submitted to Him (Jn 1:11). They should have submitted, but they did not (See comments Ph 2:5-11). Nevertheless, Jesus was seated at the right hand of God to reign over all things. At this time we do not see everything in subjection to Him (Hb 2:8). This does not mean, however, that He is not reigning over all things. The point is that God never intended that Jesus reign over all things on earth as a king seated in Jerusalem. His reign was to be from heaven. Regardless of the rebellious subjects of His present kingdom, He will come again and destroy those who have refused His reign (2 Th 1:6-9). We must also keep in mind that God's promises and plans were never subject to the whims of men. God carried out His eternal plan of redemption through Jesus regardless of the disobedience of men. ***Order of Melchizedek:*** Gn 14:18-20. See comments Hb 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11,15,21. ***Strike through kings:*** The last part of this psalm uses military terms in order to metaphorically portray the work of Jesus in His kingdom reign among the nations of the world. As a kingly priest, Jesus' sovereignty would be over all the nations of the world. Through the power of His word, millions would submit to His authority. Those who found confidence in kings of this world would turn to the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).

Chapter 111
GOD IS GOOD

Psalms 111 and 112 go together, though with different themes. Psalm 111 focuses on the nature and character of God. Psalm 112 focuses on the character of the righteous person.

111:1-10 ***Works of the Lord:*** This was the reason for the psalmist breaking forth in praise to the Lord. When one perceives the existence of God through the things that were created, and God's transcendent work in His creation, he is moved to worship (See Ps 8; Rm 1:20). ***Studied:*** Those who are righteous seek to discover God's design in the creation, and His work in the lives of men. ***Given food:*** God provides for those who seek and obey Him. ***Mindful of His covenant:*** God's work in the life of the righteous is evidence that He honors His covenants that He makes with men. ***Heritage of the nations:*** God took the land of Palestine from the ungodly nations who dwelt in it and gave it to the nation of Israel. Because of their wickedness, the nations gave up their right to the land. ***Fear of the Lord:*** This is the beginning of wisdom simply because one can never come to a knowledge of truth unless he recognizes the authority of the word of God and is obedient to that word (Jb 28:28; Pv 1:7). One can never understand the purpose for the existence of both the world and man without believing in and being obedient to God's eternal purpose for the world. And the purpose for the existence of the world was to provide man with an environment wherein he could prepare himself for eternal dwelling.

Chapter 112
PROSPERITY OF THE FAITHFUL

See introduction to Psalm 111. This psalm focuses on the character of the righteous, which righteous character led one to prosperity.

112:1-10 ***Delights greatly in His commandments:*** The psalmist identified the righteous. These were those people who loved what God said. They loved His word (2 Tm 2:15). Those who do not study the word of God, therefore, are not of those who are God's people. ***His seed:*** The descendants of the lovers of God's word will be blessed because they have been given a spiritual heritage. ***Light in the darkness:*** In a world of sin, the righteous show the right way to salvation. They know the right way because they know God's word. ***Favor and lends:*** He has mercy on those who have fallen on hard economic times. ***Discretion:*** He will be a good steward of those things that God has entrusted to his hand. ***Not be afraid:*** When hard times come, he knows that he is still in the care of God. ***Heart is steadfast:*** He is consistent in his dedication to the Lord. He is faithful and trustworthy. ***Enemies fall:*** Since the righteous know that God is working in their lives, they know that they will be delivered from their enemies. ***Dispersed abroad:*** He is charitable (2 Co 9:9). ***Desire of the wicked:*** That for which the wicked hoped will vanish away. Since the wicked do not desire that which is good, their desired temporal possessions will eventually vanish with the termination of this world (2 Pt 3).

Chapter 113
EXALTATION OF THE HUMBLE

This psalm, as well as Psalms 114–118, were psalms used during the Jewish festivals of Passover, Tabernacles and Unleavened Bread. These were psalms of adoration to the Lord.

113:1-9 There is a fervent call by the psalmist for the servants of the Lord to praise the Lord. ***The name of the Lord***: Praising the name of the Lord in ancient times meant that one was directing his praise toward the character of the Lord. When praises were made in the name of the Lord, the Lord was identified among the nations who worshiped many false gods. Israel, therefore, was called on to distinguish their God by name from those gods that had been created after the imaginations of the nations around them. This praise was to take place during the waking hours of every person. ***On the earth:*** Not only does God dwell in a heavenly realm, He transcends His creation, working among those He created for His glory. ***The poor:*** God's transcendence is not determined by economic status. He involves Himself in the lives of both the rich and poor. He lifts up the poor to be considered as those whom men would exalt as princes. Every righteous pauper is a prince in the eyes of God (See 1 Sm 2:8). ***Barren woman:***

He blesses the barren woman with a household of children. The broader application of this would be that He blessed the seed of Israel to be as the stars of the sky and sand of the sea shore (Gn 12:1-3; Is 54:1; 66:8).

Chapter 114
DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE

See introduction to Psalm 113. The historical setting of this psalm was Israel's crossing of both the Red Sea and Jordan River. The other miraculous event could have been the shaking of the earth at Mt. Sinai when God came down on it as a cloud. Since God worked these marvelous events, the psalmist personifies the sea, river and mountains to tremble in the presence of God.

114:1-8 ***Israel ... Jacob ... Judah:*** These names synonymously refer to the people of God, the twelve tribes of Israel who came out of Egyptian captivity. ***His sanctuary:*** God dwelt in His people. They were the place of His domain. Verses 5 & 6 are rhetorical questions that end in calling on the earth to tremble in the presence of God, for it is God who has total control over all His creation. In the examples that are given, He controlled the physical world for the benefit of His people. In order to deliver His people from captivity, He divided the Red Sea. For provision of His people, He brought forth water from rocks (Ex 17:6; Nm 20:8-11). In order to provide a sanctuary for His people, He divided the Jordan River so that they might enter into the promised land.

Chapter 115
FOLLY OF IDOLATRY

The theme of this psalm is glorification of God. He is the only true God, and thus must be the center of man's praise. Because the background of the psalm was the idol gods that were only the result of man's imagination, this psalm seeks to chide those who would worship idol gods instead of the living God of heaven. The psalm is a mocking attack against those who would create gods after their own image in order to condone their misguided way of life.

115:1,2 Idolaters form an image of their god in order that they might appease the empirical perceptions of man. The true God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and thus cannot be perceived by the senses of man. However, He exists, though His existence cannot be proved by the senses of men. Men can only deduct His existence by perceiving the results of His power (ch 8; Rm 1:20).

115:3-8 These words are the psalmist's mockery of the practices of the idolater (See 135:15-18). Herein is a definition of idol worship. The idolater seeks to behave according to his own desires. He seeks to be a law unto himself. Since man is religious, and must soothe his conscience, he creates a concept of a higher power that is according to his imagination and condones his behavior. The spirit of idolatry, therefore, is man creating in his own mind a concept of a god who approves of his behavior. The idolatrous religion is first created, and then to further appeal to the senses of men, a physical idol is made of stone, wood, silver or gold. Because man cannot conceive of that which is beyond his own empirical experiences, he can only form his idol after that which he sees or experiences. And since the religion that idolaters create is usually directed to the lusts of the flesh, the idolater creates an idol that is in the form of some distorted human figure, usually with some sexual orientation. Thus the idol has a mouth or ears, but is mute and deaf. It is within the foolishness of man to do such things. All men have a spirit of idolatry that is often fulfilled by worshiping money, power or positions.

115:9-13 ***He is our help:*** The psalmist contrasted the difference between idolaters and worship of the true God. Idolaters must trust in themselves, since their religions and gods were created after their own desires and image. However, the righteous trust in the God who is not of their invention, but is a God who exists in a heavenly realm. He is the God who can help and protect man.

115:14-18 ***Made heaven and earth:*** The true God made man, but idol gods were made by men. For this reason, all gods of men are of this world. ***Children of men:*** God reserves the heavenly realm for His own dwelling. He created the earth for the environment for men. ***The dead:*** Reference here seems to be to the spiritually dead, since the righteous of verse 18 will continue to bless the name of the Lord. There is life for the righteous after death, not silence (Ph 1:21-23).

Chapter 116
THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERY FROM DEATH

This is a personal psalm of praise from an individual who pours out his heart to the Lord. The person of the psalm was delivered from some disease or calamity. In thanksgiving for his deliverance, he gives himself totally to the Lord. By suffering grave diseases, people are brought to the realization that life is short. Because of this realization, people turn their thinking to things that are most important in life, and thus they turn to focusing on eternal things.

116:1-4 In this psalm the psalmist's love of the Lord was renewed because the Lord had answered his prayer by delivering him from sickness. It seems that the psalmist was close to death when the Lord came to spare his life. In some way the Lord worked providentially to restore the health of the psalmist. A miracle is not claimed by the psalmist, but he did give credit to God for his healing. Thus God can restore one to health without working a miracle that is perceived by the senses of men. In such providential work, the righteous see through faith the result of God's work, not the work as it instantly takes place as in the case of a miracle.

116:5-14 In the case of the psalmist, the Lord was gracious, righteous and merciful. All these attributes were poured out on the psalmist because of his prayer for help. ***He helped me:*** The Lord had saved him from death, brought joy again to his life, and kept him from falling. As a result, though his faith was shaken, he stood faithful in fulfilling his vows to the Lord. ***All men are a lie:*** In such situations in which the psalmist found himself, there was no reliable help that could come from men. ***Cup of salvation:*** This was possibly the drink offering that was made in thanksgiving to God (See Ex 29:40; Lv 23:37; Dt 32:38; Ez 20:28). ***Pay my vows:*** He would not only carry out his vows that he made in sickness, he would do

so publicly in order to proclaim that God had restored him. By paying his vows, he maintained his integrity.

116:15-19 ***Precious ... the death of His saints:*** The physical death of His people is of great concern to the Lord. He has given them life, and it is not without notice when they pass from this life. ***I am your servant:*** Given a second chance in life, the psalmist rededicated his life to the Lord. ***Loosed my bonds:*** He was delivered from the death of sickness. Those who are set free seek to serve those who free them. Freedom thus encourages obedience.

Chapter 117
PRAISE GOD

This psalm is a short doxology. Because of its shortness, some have assumed that it is only a fragment of an original psalm that was much longer. It is Messianic in nature (Rm 15:11).

117:1,2 ***All you nations:*** All Gentiles were called upon to give praise to the Lord, signifying again that God was the God of all nations throughout the existence of Israel. He did not cease being the God of all nations when He chose Israel from among the nations. ***Merciful kindness:*** God is gracious in His steadfast love toward us. ***Truth:*** His faithfulness is sure and steadfast throughout all time. These are sufficient reasons to sing praises to the Lord.

Chapter 118
GOD'S GOOD SALVATION

This is one of the greatest psalms of encouragement for the believer because it focuses on the central truths upon which the faithful base their lives. It was a psalm used in times of depression or calamity in order to center one's mind on the strength and salvation that comes from the Lord.

118:1-14 ***His mercy:*** The mercy that is praised in the context of the first verses was in reference to the Lord's deliverance of the psalmist from those who oppressed him. He gave thanks to the Lord because he was delivered from those who surrounded him like bees. The psalmist placed himself as a representative of the nation, and thus the Lord delivered the nation from all nations who sought to destroy Israel. ***Set me in a large place:*** This was to be set free in a space without limits. ***Lord is on my side:*** When one realizes that the Lord is working for him, then he has great confidence in facing the trials of life. ***I will see my desire:*** One can accomplish his feats in life with the Lord working through and with him. In the context of the psalmist, the psalmist did not fear in the face of his enemies because he understood that God was working for him and Israel in order to carry out the purpose for the existence of Israel. ***Confidence in man:*** Trusting in man and princes will give one limited accomplishments. However, when one puts his confidence in the Lord, the Lord can work exceedingly abundantly above all that we can imagine (60:11; Ep 3:20,21). We are more than conquerors through Him who works in us (Rm 8:37). ***Fire of thorns:*** These thorn bushes burned hot for a period, but quickly ceased to burn. Because the Lord delivers those who trust in Him, He is their strength, song, and salvation from destruction (Ex 15:2; Is 12:2).

118:15-20 ***Right hand of the Lord:*** This was the position from which authority came to work on the part of the king. In the historical setting of the psalm, the Lord had delivered Israel from enemies who had been stirred up to destroy the nation. ***Lord has chastened me:*** God had allowed the nations to rise up against Israel in order that Israel be moved to repent. Now that they had been delivered, there was a national repentance and a renewal for their commitment to Him. ***Gates of righteousness:*** As a metaphor taken from the gates of a city that allowed entrance into the city, the psalmist asked that he, the nation, be allowed into the presence of the righteous God. If the broader context of the psalm was the return of Israel from exile, then the chastisement of captivity was over and Israel was delivered from her bondage. The remnant of the nation would be allowed to return to the city of Jerusalem and rebuild the walls, which rebuilding included rebuilding the gates of the city.

118:21-29 These last words of the psalm are Messianic. Israel had been saved from total annihilation by her return from captivity. In the future, the nation would be saved from the destruction of sin by the work of the Chief Cornerstone. ***Become my salvation:*** Verses 22 & 23 are quoted four times in the New Testament (Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10,11; Lk 20:17; 1 Pt 2:7). In the context of each quotation reference is made to Jesus and His work. ***The chief cornerstone:*** The chief cornerstone was used to set the orientation of the entire building, for from the chief cornerstone the building was erected. Thus Jesus is the One from whom the church is oriented and guided (See comments Mt 16:18,19; 1 Pt 2:7). ***This is the day:*** Every day is a privilege in the life of frail men. In this context, however, reference is probably to a day of salvation. Emphasis was on the time that the nation was freed from captivity. In a salvational context, our day of salvation was made by the Lord, and thus we rejoice in our salvation. ***Send now prosperity:*** We can imagine that when this psalm was sung by the returnees from Babylonian captivity that they asked God to prosper them in their efforts. They had to return to the land, plant their seeds, and begin life anew. ***Comes in the name of the Lord:*** Jesus came in the authority of the name of God. When Jesus came, Israel had been blessing His coming with their sacrifices. ***Bind the sacrifice:*** The sacrifices were to be bound with cords. So many sacrifices were to be offered, they were to be laid in the court even to the place of the horns of the altar of burnt offering. ***I will praise You:*** The psalm concludes as it started, with praise to God for all that He had done in the history of His people. The praise of God overflows in the heart of the one who experiences the tremendous work of God in his life. Worship happens within one's heart as a result of one's perception of the good that God does in our lives.

Chapter 119
GOD'S GOOD WORD

This majestic psalm, that gives glory to the word of God, is divided into 22 sections, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, though most translations have not added the Hebrew letters to denote each of the sections. The theme of the psalm is the glorious word, or law of God, and one's

obedience to the law. Throughout the psalm there are eight synonyms that refer to the word of God: law (*torah*), testimonies (principles of action), precepts (rules for conduct), word (*dabhar*) (the proclaimed will of God through decrees), word (*imra*) (the spoken word as it comes directly from God), commandments (statements of law for direction), ordinances (principles for human relationships), and statutes (regulations for social relationships). Because of the many phrases and words that are used in reference to God's communication to man, the central focus of the psalm is to bring to the attention of all that man should do and be must come from the instructions of God.

119:1-8 The introduction to the psalm proclaims that those who are happy are those who keep themselves blameless in reference to their obedience to the law of God. Those who would be blessed must seek God with their whole heart. These are those who do not transgress the law, but walk in the ways of God. Such people should not be ashamed of their obedience because they totally focus on the will of God. By being totally committed to obedience, the psalmist was confident that the Lord would not forsake him.

119:9-16 It is possible that the psalmist was a young person. He knew that a person can purify his way in life only through dedication to the commandments of God. By staying close to the word of God, one will not wander from God's way. Since men cannot trust in themselves to direct their way, they must be committed to God's word for direction in this life. The righteous can be happy only when they have a knowledge of the word of God, and then follow what they know of the word. Through obedience, therefore, one experiences the joy that comes from following God's will.

119:17-24 It would be the goal of the righteous to live according to the statutes of God. By doing so there is great comfort and strength, knowing that one is following after God. By committing oneself to following the word of God one sources the abundance of life, vision and guidance. The psalmist felt himself a stranger on earth because of his devotion to the word of God. He was an alien among those who cared nothing for God's commandments. And since he was in such a social environment, he needed the direction of God. Only through devotion to the will of God, the psalmist felt that he could endure mockery and contempt by those in society who had no concern for the instructions of God.

119:25-32 The psalmist cried out for a spiritual revival because of his distress. He was prostrate in the dust seeking revival from God. Being filled with the word of God, he could not help but speak of God and His commandments. However, he was weeping in sorrow, and thus beseeched God that he not be false to God. He thus clung to the testimonies of God in order that God increase his understanding and joy. The result of his commitment to the law of God would be that he would run and not walk a spiritual life.

119:33-40 The heart of the psalmist was manifested in this section because of his plea for God's instruction. He sought God's help. He wanted to understand God's will, not simply have a knowledge of His word. Since the righteous delight in the word of God, the psalmist sought to know God through obedience to His will. He realized that he could do this only by keeping his mind off the things of this world, and keeping it on the testimonies of God. By doing this the insults would be ignored in his life when he no longer considered obedience to God a thing of which to be ashamed.

119:41-48 God's mercy and salvation come through one's obedience to the word of God. When one focuses his life on the testimonies of God, then he can face those who revile him. And when reviled, the psalmist asked that he speak and not be silent. He thus committed himself to keep the law, and by doing so walk in freedom. Without law there is no freedom, for law guarantees that one is free from the dictates of man and those who are controlled by emotional hysteria. When one is truly free, therefore, he is emboldened to speak before kings without being intimidated. The love of, and meditation on, the commandments of God gives one a sense of security.

119:49-56 "Deride" is a word that explained the social environment the psalmist was experiencing because he had committed himself to the word of God. However, he found hope and comfort in the statutes of God. In spite of the derision he suffered from the arrogant, he maintained his steadfast commitment to obey God. His commitment to the Lord motivated him to have a burning indignation toward those who were disobedient. His commitment to the law of God was manifested by the intensity by which he abhorred evil.

119:57-64 The psalmist had made God his portion in life. He had repented and given himself to the law of God. This was something about which he did not procrastinate. His conversion was immediate. Even though raiding parties had robbed his farm, he did not blame God, but continued to be faithful. Thus in the middle of the night he would arise to give thanks for what he had. What kept him encouraged was that he made friends with those who were like-minded, with those who loved the word of God.

119:65-72 The psalmist reviewed his life and concluded that God had been good to him in a world of evil. He had been chastened, which disciplinary action brought him closer to God (See Hb 12:11). He had learned through chastisement that obedience to the law of God is more precious than following after rebellion. Though his commitment led to slander against him, he discovered that what came from the mouth of God was more precious than material things of this world. He had learned that possession of things of this world should not possess those who focus on God.

119:73-80 Since one is created by God, then it is natural to desire the continual fashioning of the soul by the word that comes from God. When we manifest to others our obedience to the law of God, those who are also obedient will rejoice in our example. The psalmist prayed for relief from affliction in order that he might survive his distress. His commitment to the Lord had led him to being persecuted by those who were perverse. But it also led to his gaining of friends, friends who were also committed to the word of God. Because of his trust in the word of God, he asked that the arrogant be humiliated as a result of their deceitful behavior toward him.

119:81-88 The psalmist proclaimed that he was in trouble. He was suffering, and thus reached out for aid from God. As

a wineskin smoking in flames, his soul had become blackened and wrinkled. His suffering had brought on premature aging in his life. He thus yearned for deliverance from the arrogant who sought to trap him in snares. However, though persecuted, and almost consumed, he turned to the precepts of God for deliverance.

119:89-96 The psalmist had been delivered from his affliction. The reason he did not perish was that he resorted to the unchanging word of God. Though things around him were continually changing, he took comfort in the unchanging word of God. What the psalmist had learned through his experience was that he had witnessed that there is a limit to that which is considered perfect by man. But there is no limit to the perfection of the word of God.

119:97-104 His love of the word of God was proved because on it he thought throughout the day. Because of his concentration on the word of God, he had greater understanding than those teachers who rejected the word. He did not become arrogant in thinking that he knew everything, but realized that the fear of God was the beginning of wisdom. The precepts of God had greater influence in his life than the traditions that had been handed to him by the fathers who had rejected the word of God. Therefore, he made a conscious decision not to follow after evil ways since the judgments of God took control of his life.

119:105-112 The psalmist realized that it is not within man to direct his own behavior in order to be pleasing to God. Therefore, he made the word of God the map by which he directed his life. He thus gave unto God the freewill offerings of prayer and praise in appreciation for God's directing of his life. He confessed that his life was in his hands, and thus always in danger because of his fallibility. Though surrounded by those who would ensnare him, he committed himself to the end of his life to serve God.

119:113-120 The psalmist realized the danger of following after those who were double-minded. He found safety only in trusting in the word of God, for in trusting the word of God there was safety from those who work evil. Those who turn from the word of God will come to nothing. They are like the dross, or residue from the processes of refining. They are cast aside. Thus the psalmist chose to act on his fear of God by obeying God's commandments.

119:121-128 The psalmist was oppressed, but not oppressed because he had done something wrong. He affirmed that he had done that which was right. Nevertheless, when one does right, those who are evil will persecute the righteous. By following the word of God, the psalmist received assurance from God that he was right, and his oppressors were wrong. Though the unrighteous had violated the law of God by persecuting those who sought to be obedient to God, the obedient psalmist would continue to love God's commandments. One makes void the law by disobedience. One establishes the law by obedience. Those who choose to be obedient proclaim that they hate false behavior.

119:129-136 When one finds the word of God wonderful, then he will keep the word. When the word of God is opened in the life of a person, it gives light and direction. Innocent, or receptive people, give ear to what God says, and thus follow in His ways. When one realizes that the commandments come from God, then he gasps for them as after air for survival. He thus seeks to be directed in behavior by the instructions of God. Being directed by God's instructions frees one from being led by sin. In obedience to God's word there is freedom from the oppressing traditions of men. At the same time, the psalmist was in great mourning for those who were still in the bondage of those who did not keep the law of God.

119:137-144 The psalmist was consumed by the will of God, for through the precepts, statutes, commandments and ordinances of God the nature of God was revealed. What was revealed was that God was righteous, upright and faithful. For this reason, the word of God was pure, and thus to be desired in a world of iniquity. What promises were made in the word of God, therefore, could be trusted. Because he was considered with contempt by those who did not trust in the word of God, the psalmist reaffirmed his commitment by stating that he had not forgotten God's word. In fact, one's journey through the persecution of the world enlightens one concerning the strength and comfort that comes from the word of God.

119:145-152 Oppression had come into the life of the psalmist. Because of his anxiety, he was up in the morning crying out to God. He was not able to sleep because of anxiety. Thus being troubled throughout the night, he went to the word of God for hope. Prayer and meditation on the testimonies of God brought hope. He thus asked for a personal revival according to the judgment of God. Those who were oppressing the psalmist were those who had no respect for the word of God.

119:153-160 The psalmist was oppressed by those who had no consideration for the word of God. He was thus discouraged. He asked for a personal revival in his life. He knew where to go for this revival. It was to the testimonies of God, the instructions of God that would lead him through times of persecution. When enduring persecution, he remained loyal to God's judgments. Since God's word can be trusted, he knew that if he deviated from it, he would not abide forever as the word of God.

119:161-168 Even rulers of the land brought persecution upon the psalmist. Nevertheless, in the turmoil of his life he did not turn from the commandments of God. In reference to the word of God, he was like one who had discovered a great treasure. Using the number "seven" metaphorically, he stated that he was constantly in praise of God. He was thus in great peace of mind because of his focus on the testimonies of God. Those who trust in the word of God are guarded from turning aside from righteousness. Those who trust and obey God will have a great life, a life of peace, strength and comfort.

119:169-176 Because he had given himself to the word of God, the psalmist asked that God stay close. He would use his mouth for the propagation of the commandments of God. In this quest, he asked for help from God. As a lost sheep in the wilderness, the psalmist asked that God continue to direct him through His commandments. In the midst of so many dangers from straying in the wilderness of the world, he would not

forget the commandments of God, for only through obedience to these commandments can one find his way to God.

Chapter 120
DELIVERANCE FROM THE TREACHEROUS

The psalmist's prayer in the past had encouraged him to trust in answers from God in the present and future. The psalmist was oppressed by enemies, and thus he uttered this psalm wherein he called for God's judgment on his oppressors.

120:1-7 ***Lying lips:*** The oppression was not physical attacks, but slanderous words that came from the mouth of his enemies. Such verbal attacks caused the psalmist great anxiety. ***Sharp arrows:*** The fruit of a slanderous mouth are piercing arrows of judgment. Eventually, people discover the evil heart of the slanderous person. The result will be as a flash of intense heat that comes from burning a broom tree. The retribution on the slanderous person and vindication of the slandered, is that the truth is eventually known by all. The slanderous person will reap the consequences of his evil speech (See comments Mt 7:1,2; Gl 6:7). ***Meshech:*** This may have been a geographical area that was harsh for living (See Gn 10:2; Ez 32:26,27). Or, it may have been a habitation among a people with whom it was difficult to live. ***Kedar:*** See Gn 25:13; 1 Ch 1:29.

Chapter 121
GOD GUARDS HIS PEOPLE

This psalm was probably sung during travel to the tabernacle for the Passover, feast of Tabernacles and Unleavened Bread. The psalmist expressed a deep trust in God for protection on the journey. The key word is "keep," emphasizing the care of God for the individual.

121:1-8 ***The hills:*** This was a psalm of one journeying to one of the hills on which Jerusalem sat. From a distance he could see the hills and rejoice, for he was nearing the end of his journey. Instead of the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle being annually moved throughout the tribal territories of Israel, it was permanently placed in Jerusalem. Thus the psalmist expressed his joy as he neared the temple that was symbolic of the presence of God. ***My help:*** Throughout the psalm the psalmist expressed his reassurance he received from the Lord. ***He who preserves:*** God would not allow his foot to slip. God is alert to our needs. He keeps the faithful and provides a place of rest where one is shaded from the turmoil of his journey. In keeping His people safe, God preserves them. They are preserved blameless because of His grace (See 1 Th 5:23). If we would assume a metaphorical understanding of this psalm, we can assume that God cares for those who are on their journey to the presence of God in heaven.

Chapter 122
PRAYER FOR PEACE

The theme of this psalm is Jerusalem, the city around which faith and government were centered from the time of David. The psalm highlights the festive journey that dedicated Jews annually made to the city.

122:1,2 ***I was glad:*** There was excitement in the air when the annual journey to Jerusalem came. The people yearned to go to the temple in Jerusalem for a meeting with other devoted people who would come from throughout the promised land. This was a journey to go to fellowship with like-minded people who also brought their sacrifices to be offered and to eat their meals with family and friends. It was a beautiful time of fellowship and nation building.

122:3-5 After coming into the gates of the city, the country people of Israel took pride in the temple that Solomon had built and the city itself. ***Compact:*** It was a city that was united together as the center of reference for the nation of Israel. ***To which the tribes go up:*** It was the gathering place for all tribes of Israel for the Passover feast, feast of Tabernacles and Unleavened Bread. It was a site that symbolized the reunification of the twelve tribes that had throughout the year been scattered to their farms. ***Thrones:*** David made Jerusalem the center of government and faith in Israel. ***House of David:*** This statement assumes that the psalm was written many years after the reign of David, and thus the psalm cannot be ascribed to David as the writer.

122:6-9 ***Peace:*** The attitude of the psalmist toward Jerusalem reflected the attitude of the nation. Israel took great pride in Jerusalem and the temple. The city brought a sense of security and peace to the people. It gave them national identity among the nations. When there was peace, the people lived in prosperity. For the sake of the temple, the house of God, the Israelites prayed that peace prevail within the walls of the city.

Chapter 123
PRAYER FOR HELP

The psalmist writes from an emotional state of depression because he suffered from the scorn of others. He thus cried out for relief from the taunts of those who cared little for righteousness.

123:1-4 When in times of depression, the faithful will look to God. As the eyes of slaves are fixed on those who have control over their lives, so the obedient fix their attention on God in order to find deliverance from the emotional turmoil of the world. ***Filled with contempt:*** The arrogant had unleashed their disdain upon the people of God. The scorn had become overbearing. The psalmist did not unleash his frustration on those who scorned the people of God. He simply asked that God deliver them. He turned the matter over to God. No immediate answer was given from God. We only assume that the cry from the psalmist was eventually heard on behalf of the people. The writing of Psalm 124 was probably a reflection on God's answer.

Chapter 124
THANKSGIVING FOR RESCUE

This psalm seems to have been written in answer to the plea of Psalm 123. When this psalm was written, the Lord had delivered the people, though we are not told how God delivered them.

124:1-8 What is stated is that the people would have been

overcome if it had not been for the deliverance of God. The deliverance, therefore, was noted by the psalmist as evidence that God was for His people. Not only in this deliverance, but in many throughout the history of Israel, the psalmist concluded that the existence of Israel was totally dependent on the work of God. The nation would have long vanished if it were not for God delivering them from oppressing nations. ***Prey to their teeth:*** They were not devoured by their enemies because God rescued them. They were delivered as frail birds from a snare. Because of their faith in the God of creation, they were delivered to continue as a nation. What they did not fully understand was that God delivered them for the sake of the world, for through Israel would come the Savior of the world.

Chapter 125
THE PRESENCE OF GOD

As with previous psalms, this psalm is also an expression of their security that was represented by Jerusalem, Mt. Zion. The presence of God was symbolized through the existence of Jerusalem and the temple, and thus to the Jews, Jerusalem was a holy city. The temple signified the presence of God.

125:1-5 Jerusalem was a symbol of stability. The people found strength in its presence as the capital city of Israel. ***Mountains:*** Though Jerusalem was built on hills, the city was also surrounded by hills. The symbolism is that the Lord surrounds His people in order to make them feel safe and secure. ***Allotted land:*** Because the Lord was the security of Israel, the wicked would not be able to take possession of that which was given to the people. ***Do good:*** The plea is that God work on behalf of those who have committed themselves to Him. There is no reason why the wicked should expect that God do good to them. Those who are crooked in their ways have only the judgment of God to which to look forward.

Chapter 126
RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY

The historical setting of this psalm is the restoration of Israel to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity (See comments Er & Ne). The nation had been taken into captivity because of their apostasy to idolatrous gods (2 Ch 36:6-21). They were allowed to return because of their repentance.

126:1-6 ***Those who dream:*** They could not believe that God would work in the lives of pagan kings in order to allow them to return to their land. ***Laughter ... joy:*** The announcement of their release was a surreal announcement that brought great joy to Israel. Some who heard were the descendants of those who had been in captivity in 722/21 B.C. when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom. ***The South:*** The Negev was a desert region south of Palestine. ***Sow in tears:*** The time of sowing is a time of labor and toil. ***Reap in joy:*** Harvest is a time of joy when one receives the reward of his patient labors. The captives had gone forth from their land in tears, but returned to the land in joy and thanksgiving.

Chapter 127
GOD BLESSES

This is a psalm of wisdom. As a wisdom psalm, the focus is on what brings joy to one's daily living. In this case, that which brought joy was the guarantee of a heritage through one's children.

127:1-5 ***Labor in vain:*** The point is that security in Israel without the Lord was useless. A strong house and guards for the city are of no avail without the protection that comes from the Lord. ***Bread of sorrows:*** That is, toiling in labor in order to produce one's food. ***Gives to His beloved:*** God takes care of those who are His (Mt 6:25-34). Therefore, they can sleep with peace of mind. ***Children:*** Children that are born to a young father are his strength when he is old. As arrows are a defense, so the children who take care of their aged parents have assumed responsibility to protect them in their old age. ***Speak with the enemies:*** Since the elders assembled at the gates of the city for decisions, so the children would stand for their parents against all who would falsely accuse them. Another interpretation may be that the young would guard the city by defending it against the enemy who would attack the gates.

Chapter 128
BLESSINGS FROM FEAR

This psalm concludes the last part of Psalm 127, that one is blessed if he fears the Lord. He will be blessed with children, which children will increase God's people in the holy city of Jerusalem.

128:1-6 ***Fears the Lord:*** The definition of fearing the Lord is walking in His commandments. When one fears the Lord, he obeys. The benefits from obedience, therefore, were the success of his farming and many children in his family. His crops would be spared drought. The nation would also experience the population increase of Jerusalem and live to be old in age. Because of his obedient way of life, such would be passed on to his children, and thus peace would prevail in Jerusalem. Since disobedience would lead to God's chastisement of the nation, obedience would lead to God's protection of the nation and prosperity of the people.

Chapter 129
OVERTHROW OF GOD'S ENEMIES

In this psalm the psalmist speaks for the nation. Israel had a long history of oppression because of their disobedience to the word of God. Their oppression, therefore, was allowed by God because of their lack of faithfulness to His covenant. Their obedience would lead to their deliverance by the overthrow of their enemies.

129:1-8 ***Many times:*** From the time Israel was a young nation, oppression was brought on the people because of their rebellious apostasy. God had warned them as a young nation that if they did not keep the conditions of the covenant He had made with them at Mt. Sinai, they would be disciplined. They thus had no reason to complain for their history of discipline because God had forewarned them of what would happen if they were disobedient. ***Not prevailed:*** Though oppressed, God did not allow them to go out of existence. ***Plowers plowed:*** They were driven into captivity as slaves. When they repented, God cut the bonds of bondage and they were

delivered from their captivity. ***The wicked:*** Those who persecuted and oppressed Israel were disgraced when God allowed the Israelites to be born again as a nation after the Babylonian captivity. Though Israel was oppressed throughout her history, the wicked who oppressed her had come and gone. Not one nation that oppressed Israel has survived history. They were like grass that would spring up on the roof, but dry up when scorched by the sun. They were temporary nations in history that were of no profit to the reaper.

Chapter 130
GOD'S FORGIVENESS

This is a psalm of penitence. It is a cry from one who was deeply repentant for the sins of his life. The plea for forgiveness comes from the heart of one who knew God's grace and forgiveness.

130:1-8 ***Your ears:*** It was not that God had physical ears, but that He would give attention to the plea of the psalmist for forgiveness. The personification of God with human features was for the sake of the psalmist, and those who would cry out to God for forgiveness. ***If You ... mark iniquities:*** If God kept a record of every sin of an individual, without His grace no man could be saved (Rm 3:9,10; 6:23). ***Feared:*** God is obeyed because He is feared. And because He is obeyed, those who obey are forgiven. Forgiveness continues because there are those who continue to fear the Lord (Compare comments 1 Jn 1:7). ***In His word:*** God has promised His forgiveness, and thus we have hope for forgiveness because He has stated that He will remember our sins no more (See comments Hb 10:16,17). ***Wait for the Lord:*** The psalmist was confident in the forgiveness of God. ***Those who watch:*** The psalmist's confidence in the mercy of God was more than the watchman who had confidence that the sun would rise. The psalmist trusted in the faithfulness of God to forgive. ***Abundant redemption:*** God is rich in forgiveness, and thus all must come to Him with a repentant heart. ***Redeem Israel:*** The psalmist called on all Israel to come to the Lord for forgiveness. God will redeem the repentant from their iniquities. For this reason, one must come out of his iniquities in order to be forgiven. If we persist in sin, there is no forgiveness.

Chapter 131
TRUST IN THE LORD

The psalmist directs this psalm toward a presumptuous heart. It is a psalm that expresses the humility of one who seems to have been arrogant in his knowledge, and now has humbled himself in the calmness of the security that is in the Lord. When he wrote, he was no longer haughty in trying to exalt himself to be someone he was not.

131:1-3 ***Things too high for me:*** This gem of knowledge would bring contentment to thousands who seek to be recognized. The psalmist seems to have gone this route in life, but found himself always in competition with others. He then found himself, and became content with who he was. He realized his own destiny and the futility of trying to be considered better than others in a world of competitive spirits. He discovered the secret of not considering himself to be somebody he was not. He ceased placing himself in a situation that was above his abilities to handle. ***As a weaned child:*** Though it was difficult for him to separate himself from those who craved so much, he found peace of mind only when he found himself. Contentment comes when one realizes that God is pleased with one's use of the gifts that he has received from God. Contentment comes when we are satisfied with who we are and do not compare ourselves with others or with what others have and do.

Chapter 132
GOD'S BLESSING OF THE SANCTUARY

Our understanding of this psalm is based on the fact that Israel was a theocracy. The religious ceremonies of Israel were joined with the civil laws that governed the people. By this time in the history of Israel, the centrality of faith and state in Israel was centered in Jerusalem, the king and the temple. Thus this psalm focuses on the centrality of these three aspects of the faith and government of Israel.

132:1-7 ***Remember David:*** It was David who desired to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem (1 Ch 28:1-6). ***His afflictions:*** These were David's struggles to escape the killing hand of Saul. These afflictions included his efforts to accomplish his desire to find a permanent place for the ark of the covenant. ***Habitation for the mighty God:*** It was not that God needed a place to live. The ark of the covenant symbolized the presence of God. And thus David wanted to permanently locate the ark in a structure in Jerusalem. By doing this, he focused the minds of the people toward Jerusalem and his kingship in the city. We must keep in mind that God originally intended that the ark be housed in the tabernacle, and thus moved annually throughout the territories of Israel. This movement of the tabernacle had taken place for over 400 hundred years before David sought to permanently locate the ark in Jerusalem (See comments 2 Sm 6:1-19; 7:1-29). ***Ephratah:*** This was probably the region of Kirjath-jearim where the ark was located for many years before it was moved to Jerusalem (1 Sm 7:1,2). ***His footstool:*** The high priest would go once a year into the holy of holies and bow before the ark. The presence of God was symbolized to be above the ark.

132:8-12 See 2 Ch 6:41,42. ***Ark of your strength:*** The ark of the covenant. ***David ... Your anointed:*** This statement is significant in reference to the Davidic kings. Not only was David anointed to be king over Israel, but when he was anointed, God was anointing the Davidic dynasty. After David was anointed, no one who was not of David's genealogy could rightfully reign on the throne of God. Peter refers to this promise of God to David after Jesus had ascended to the throne of David in heaven (At 2:30). Thus the perpetuity of the seedline of David reigning on his throne was fulfilled in Christ.

132:13-18 ***The Lord has chosen Zion:*** Actually, it was David who chose Jerusalem for the central government of Israel. God allowed David's choice, and thus credit is given to God for making the choice. He gave this concession to David because He honored David's desire. The same thought would apply to David as a king in Israel. It was not God's original

intention that a king reign over Israel. His original plan was that He reign over Israel directly from heaven. But the people wanted a king. And thus, God allowed them to have a king. This was a concession of God, not His original plan for Israel. The same was true with Jerusalem. It was a concession to David, for David wanted a central government for the people. The temple was also a concession by God, for David wanted to build a temple for the ark of the covenant. However, once the concessions were given by God, then David was God's anointed, Jerusalem was God's choice, and the temple became the dwelling place of God. ***Here I will dwell:*** It was not that God lives in buildings that are built with the hands of men. Jerusalem was the symbol of God's habitation in Israel. Neither was it that God ceased to be the God of the nations of the world. God dwelt among the nations of the world throughout the history of Israel. God did not cease being the God of the nations when He chose and used Israel to bring the Savior of the world into the world. ***Horn of David to bud:*** The authority of the lineage of David would be manifested from the throne of David that was in Jerusalem. David was in authority because he was anointed by God.

Chapter 133
UNITY AMONG BROTHERS

The context of this psalm would be the unity of the tribes of Israel as they came together for their national feasts. One of the reasons for the fall of Israel was their autonomous behavior they developed as they territorially and tribally disconnected from one another. Their tribal independence from one another left them vulnerable to the attack of their enemies. But when unity prevailed, their enemies were intimidated by their united strength as a nation.

133:1-3 When there is a desire within the hearts of brothers to be together, then unity prevails. Brothers must enjoy one another's company. This type of unity is not organized. It comes forth from the hearts of those who love one another (Jn 13:34,35). ***Precious ointment:*** This was a reference to the time when Aaron was anointed as the high priest of Israel (Ex 30:22-30). ***Dew of Hermon:*** The mountain regions of Mt. Hermon in northern Palestine were at a high altitude. There would be dew on the mountains in the summer, and frost in the winter. Both were refreshing (Compare Gn 27:28; Hs 14:5). There was security in national unity. But beginning with the division of the tribes after the death of Solomon, disunity prevailed in Israel. When the representatives of the tribes came together for the annual feasts, however, at least unity prevailed among those who came.

Chapter 134
THE NIGHT GUARDS

This psalm was a blessing that was given to the priests as they began their duties in the temple. They encouraged one another as they prepared to carry out the hundreds of sacrifices that had to be made for the pilgrims who had come to the sanctuary of God in order to celebrate Israel's nationhood.

134:1-3 The duties of the servants in this psalm performed their duties in the night watch. Their work was in the sanctuary, and thus they lifted up their hands as an outward expression of reverence and praise directed toward God (28:2; 141:2; Lm 2:19; 1 Tm 2:8). ***Bless you:*** God was called on to bless those who gave their service at the house of God. Since Jerusalem symbolized the abiding presence of God, it was out of Jerusalem that the blessing of God would go (Compare Is 2:1-4).

Chapter 135
GOD'S WORKS & FOOLISH IDOLS

This is a psalm of praise. God's greatness is magnified because of His creative power. Thus the gods that are created in the minds of men, and formed into idols by the hands of men, are nothing. In the eyes of God, such idolatry is foolishness.

135:1-7 God is worthy of praise because of His creative power. Those who served in the temple were to lift their voices in praise to God. ***Pleasant:*** God's name is gracious, and thus brings peace of mind to those who respond to His existence. ***Own possession:*** Israel was a chosen people of God, and thus God's prized possession among men. Israel was chosen for the purpose of bringing the Savior into the world (Gn 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). ***Above all gods:*** It is not that there were other gods. False gods are only the imagination of men. Thus the other gods are the minds of men who should worship the only true and living God. Unfortunately, they worshiped that which they had created after their own image. The true God created the universe and man. False gods are created by man. The psalmist's reasoning is that one should praise God because God's existence is witnessed in the creation (ch 8; Rm 1:20).

135:8-12 God also manifested His power in what He did to deliver Israel from Egyptian captivity. God brought great plagues on Egypt. He killed Sihon and Og who opposed Israel. Because the Amorites, and those of Bashan, rose up against God's chosen possession of people, the territories of these nations were given to Israel.

135:13-21 ***Idols of the nations:*** In this context, as in others, the idol gods represent the rebellion of men against God. Since they had created false gods in their minds that would condone their wicked behavior, the God of heaven had no influence over their lives (Is 44:9). They gave up on God in order to follow after their own imaginations (See Rm 1:18-32). The idolaters behaved as their gods because they had imagined their gods in order to walk after their own desires. ***Bless the Lord:*** In the historical environment of idolatry, and after a review of the spirit of idolatry in man, the psalmist called on Israel and her spiritual leaders to focus on the true God. They must fear (obey) God and not the imagined gods of the nations around them.

Chapter 136
THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S BLESSINGS

The format of this psalm is different than other psalms. Since each verse ends with "for His mercy endures forever," this could possibly have been a psalm that was chanted by the assembly. The focus of the psalm is on the mercy of God, and thus all the assembly responded to the primary statements that

were said by the priest. The people would respond, "For His mercy endures forever."

136:1-9 ***Mercy endures forever:*** All that exists is the result of the mercy of God. God could have existed alone in eternity, but He chose not to. He created the universe and us because He is love. ***God of gods:*** He is the true God above the minds of those He created. He is not, therefore, the invention of the minds of men. ***Lord of lords:*** God is the Master of those who are lords among men over their servants. He is Lord over all imaginations by which men would bring themselves into bondage. Jesus assumed this position when He ascended to the right hand of God (1 Tm 6:15). Jesus will maintain His position of King of kings and Lord of lords until He comes again (See comments 1 Co 15:26-28). ***Who alone does great wonders:*** Only the One who miraculously created all things has the power to miraculously work. For this reason, Satan has no miraculous power that is indigenous with himself. He was a created being, as all spirit beings (Cl 1:16). But he was not created with inherent miraculous power to be able to do miraculous works apart from God. Only God has the power to command the supernatural. All other supposed miracles are only the imagination of those who seek to be led astray from the miraculous power of God. False gods are created in the minds of men when men seek for a sign outside the realm of God's supernatural being and power. ***Great lights:*** If one would be a believer, he must believe that God was the creator of all that exists (See comments Gn 1 & 2). True believers would never believe that either the material or biological world came into existence from matter that had previously existed.

136:10-26 See 135:8-12. ***Smote Egypt:*** The existence of the nation of Israel was a miracle of God. Israel was the only culture of people in the history of the world who became a free nation in one night by being delivered from one of the most powerful nations of the world. Their birth as a nation was literally generated over night. Such has never happened in the history of the world. The psalmist wants us to understand that this was a miracle of God. It was not something that happens by natural sociological means. Only God can do such a thing, which thing He also did with the church, by bringing it into existence in only one day (See comments At 2). The psalmist thus presents several of the miraculous events that surrounded the exodus of Israel from Egypt, as well as the strength of this nation that was born out of slavery and then conquered warrior nations in the land that God had given them. The existence of the nation of Israel was truly a historical miracle of God. ***God of heaven:*** He is the God who exists in a heavenly realm, not originated by the minds of men (2 Ch 36:23; Er 1:2; 5:11,12; Dn 2:18,44; 5:23).

Chapter 137
SORROW IN EXILE

This is a strong imprecatory psalm against the captors of the Jews. It is a prayer that Israel be avenged for what they had done to God's people. The historical setting is a time when Israel was in Babylonian captivity. This psalm is thus a picture of an intimidated nation of people who were suffering under the bondage of a foreign people.

137:1-9 ***Sat down ... remembered Zion:*** The Jews were stuck in captivity and resided in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers of Babylon. This was the first generation of captives because they remembered Jerusalem from which they had been taken. ***Hung our harps:*** There was no joy in their hearts to sing. ***Sing us:*** They were taunted by the Babylonians to sing about what was taken from them, that is their glorious city of Jerusalem. ***Remember:*** Those who taunted these first captives had performed terrible deeds. They had dashed the heads of Israelite babies against rocks during the siege of Jerusalem. When the city fell, they could not nurture babies on the way back to Babylon, and thus the Babylonians killed their little ones. These memories were still fresh on the minds of the ones in this context who were taunted to sing of Jerusalem to their captors. ***Edom:*** The Edomites did not take part in the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. However, they had rejoiced over its destruction (See comments Ob 10–16). ***Day of Jerusalem:*** This would be the day when God brought the Babylonian Empire to a close, which He did when the Medo-Persian Empire brought an end to Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty of reigning kings over Babylon. ***Raze it:*** In 586 B.C., Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian army of King Nebuchadnezzar. They destroyed the temple and the city, tearing down the stone buildings to the ground. ***Repay:*** Babylon was repaid that which she had done to Jerusalem. She reaped what she had sown. In the bitterness of his own feelings, the psalmist made the imprecatory plea that what the Babylonian army had done to their children would be done to them. These words should not be interpreted from the viewpoint of loving one's neighbor as himself, but in the historical context of a metaphorical retribution that would come on the Babylonians. They were eventually punished for their deeds. Their existence was terminated, even to this day.

Chapter 138
THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S GRACE

This psalm was written by one who was distant from the temple, and thus it was composed after the reign of David, for David did not build the temple. It is generally accepted that the psalm was written after the Babylonian exile by one who was still in the land of his captors, and yet to be restored to the presence of the rebuilt temple.

138:1-8 ***Whole heart:*** Meaningful worship comes from the heart of one who has totally given himself to the Lord. The totally committed can give themselves in total worship. ***Before the gods:*** There were no other gods. Reference here would possibly be to those who had created gods after their own image, or to those who had set themselves up as gods among men. Many pharaohs and kings of ancient times assumed to be gods among the people over whom they reigned. ***Worship toward ... temple:*** The psalmist was not in the presence of the temple, which temple was built by Solomon. In his worship, he would possibly prostrate himself toward the temple. The psalmist was not commanding any mandate of posture in prayer or direction to which one must pray. He was only expressing his personal feelings that were undoubtedly patterned after Solomon, and carried on with others as Daniel

(2 Ch 6:20; Dn 6:10). To the Jews, the temple was the representation of God among His people in their promised land. Thus in their worship, they paid homage to God, as well as maintained their nationalism by praying toward the temple in Jerusalem. ***Magnified ... name ... word:*** The name and word of God are inseparable. Jesus came in the name of God, but was also the revealed word of God (Jn 1:1-14). With the name of God comes His word, both of which are exalted above all things. ***Respect for the lowly:*** It is the nature of God, and thus the nature of the godly, to have concern for those of low estate. Arrogance and pride are identified by one's disregard for the poor, and those of humble estate. Godliness is identified by those who do not position people in society by either their money or work. ***Middle of trouble:*** This psalm concludes with the psalmist's trust that God would bring him through all troubles. Though troubles might cast one down, the psalmist was confident that God would revive him, and thus bring him through trouble alive. ***Destiny for me:*** God will work in our lives in order to bring about that for which He gave us gifts to accomplish (Compare comments Ep 4:11-16). We must assume that His gifts for us are given in order that we accomplish our destiny in life for Him. When we work to accomplish our destiny, God will work for us.

Chapter 139
OMNIPRESENCE & OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

This is one of the greatest of all the psalms. It is a spiritual highlight that brings comfort to the people of God. Because it focuses on the omniscience and omnipresence of God, the psalmist was reassured that God was in control of all things. He was not distant from His creation, but transcendent. Knowing this truth reassures the righteous that God is in control of all things.

139:1-6 ***You know:*** These first verses define the omniscience of God. God knows our inner thoughts, our motives, our words before they are spoken, and where we are at all times. Neither in thinking nor presence can one escape the omniscience of God. ***Thought from afar:*** Before we conceive our thoughts, God knows them. ***Not a word in my mouth:*** When we do utter words, God knows the motives and thoughts behind the words that we speak. ***Knowledge is too wonderful:*** It is beyond the comprehension of men to understand the omniscience of God. If we did understand, then we would be gods. We must not frustrate ourselves, therefore, by not understanding how God can have such knowledge.

139:7-12 ***Where will I go:*** This section of scripture explains the omnipresence of God. He is everywhere at all times. One cannot escape the presence of God by going to the grave (Sheol), or by ascending into heaven. One cannot go to the depths of the sea to find a place that is free from the presence of God. ***Darkness:*** Darkness cannot hide one from God, for God is not subject to the effects of either darkness or light. Darkness is a result of the creation of light, but God existed before the creation of light, and thus existed in what men call darkness (See Gn 1). Thus God does not exist in His creation, but neither does He separate Himself from His creation. He is not defined by that which was created, nor does His existence depend on that which exists. His existence is throughout creation, and without His existence all that is created would cease (Hb 1:3).

139:13-16 Though omniscient and omnipresent, God is mindful of every individual of His creation. The psalmist was concerned that our understanding of the awesomeness of God might lead us to believe that He is indifferent to the details of His creation, and thus might overlook individuals. But the psalmist reassures us that God even knew each of us while we were still in our mother's womb, before we were even taking form. ***Fearfully and wonderfully made:*** Because man can never fully understand the process by which a human being is developed from a fertilized egg in the womb of a woman, God is held in wonder. In fact, the wonder should generate fear as to how such a thing could possibly have happened without the existence of God. When contemplating such things, the philosophy of evolution is a mockery to the intelligence of honest men. It is not reasonable to conclude that such things as the development of a man from a microscopic egg of woman could be the result of a process of evolution from matter to the existence of life. ***In Your scroll they were all written:*** God can foresee without predestining something to happen. There are no surprises with God. He can see our lives without establishing our lives to be unchanging fate that is void of the freewill of man. This is certainly beyond the understanding of man. But we must not be frustrated by what God can do that we cannot understand. The fact that God can foreknow without predestining is what defines God to be beyond the invention of our imagination. If we could understand this ability of God, then we would be sure that we would have created a god after our own image and mental abilities. If we conclude that we fully understand God, then we can be assured that the god we have claimed to understand fully is not the God of heaven.

139:17-24 ***I am still with you:*** The psalmist has just spoken of the omnipresence of God among humanity, and His omniscience concerning all knowledge. Thus whether one arises from sleep, or from death, he is still in the presence and knowledge of God. ***You will slay the wicked:*** God's protection of the righteous involves their deliverance from the wicked. And God's deliverance of ourselves from the wicked means the destruction of the wicked. Because the psalmist was godly, his attitude toward the wicked was as God's. He hated their evil. His hatred was concerning their actions, not their being. One can hate the sin, but love the sinner. Thus the psalmist closed by asking God to search his own heart, lest there be in it any wicked ways by which he himself could become the enemy of God.

Chapter 140
PROTECTION FROM PERSECUTORS

The historical setting of this psalm is division within the kingdom. There were evidently some Gentile influences within Israel that were being antagonistic to those who were Israelites by descent. It may have been that some were Israelites who went into apostasy after false gods. There is an imprecatory focus of the psalm in that the psalmist asked for God's

judgment to be unleashed on those who persecuted those who were faithful to Him.

140:1-5 The psalmist wrote while under the threat of those who were his enemies. These were arrogant people who had plotted to cause him to stumble. In order to accomplish their attack, they had schemed traps into which they supposed the psalmist would fall. ***The arrogant:*** An arrogant attitude is a personality that generates sin. The arrogant person exalts himself in comparison to and competition with his fellow man. He devises schemes in order to maintain either his position or status in society. In this context, this person used every means available in order to ensnare the psalmist.

140:6-11 ***You are my God:*** Because he had committed himself to God, the psalmist asked that God answer his prayer. Since God had previously protected the psalmist in a time of affliction, he called on God to again bring down judgment on his enemies. ***Do not grant:*** Do not allow the wicked to go without punishment. ***Exalt themselves:*** Those who are successful in their wicked schemes often pride themselves because of their accomplishments. They boast about their ability to develop schemes by which they have gained advantage over their neighbors. ***Mischief of their own lips:*** They must reap what they sow. ***Burning coals ... fire:*** This is reminiscent of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. These were cities that suffered total destruction because of their wickedness. ***Evil speaker:*** If one who has an evil heart is accepted by the people, then it is difficult to turn the people from his influence. Through his smooth and fair speech he deceives the people into following after his wickedness.

140:12,13 God will take the side of the righteous. He will sustain the righteous. Though a misguided society may afflict the righteous, God will come to their aid (9:18; 10:2; 18:27; 22:24). ***Dwell in Your presence:*** The righteous now dwell in the presence of God . They do so by being obedient to His ways, and by living a life that manifests that they are His children. When they transition by death into the presence of God, they feel comfortable with God, for they have throughout their lives lived according to His will. In reference to the will of God, there will be nothing intimidating for the righteous to be near God when they die. They will be intimidated by His awesomeness, but they will have known His will.

Chapter 141
SANCTIFICATION & PROTECTION

The psalmist felt that his only recourse for spiritual survival was to lament over his sin and voice repentance to God. He thus asked to be preserved from evil by fellowshipping those who were righteous.

141:1-10 ***Prayer be ... as incense:*** As incense is pleasing to the senses, so the psalmist asked that his prayers be accepted by God as pleasing incense (Compare Rv 5:8). ***Evening sacrifice:*** See Ex 30:7,8; Lv 2:2. ***Lifting up of hands:*** See 28:1; 63:4; 1 Tm 2:8. ***Let not my heart:*** The psalmist asked that he not be tempted beyond that which he could endure (1 Co 10:13). ***Wicked works with men:*** The first thing to do in order not to be inclined to evil is to separate oneself from those who do wicked things. If one seeks to associate with unrighteous people, then he will be tempted to partake of those things that bring pleasure to wicked people. ***Righteous smite me:*** Loving correction was welcomed by the psalmist as a sign of true fellowship. In order to be against the wicked, one must be in the presence of the righteous. And in the presence of the righteous, one considers the reproof of fellow servants of God to be refreshing, for such reproof is a sign of love and healing. ***When their judges are overthrown:*** The rulers maintained their position with the people through their lofty words. But the psalmist knew that eventually the people would discover the sweet words of truth that came from him. ***Our bones:*** Though at the time of writing he was suffering at the hands of those who scattered and damaged his reputation, he would remain confident that the Lord would not leave him destitute. God would deliver him from the verbal snares of the wicked. The wicked would eventually be the victims of their own devices, while he would enjoy the safety that is provided by God.

Chapter 142
HELP IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

In this psalm the psalmist finds himself in great distress. He was in a desperate situation where he poured out his plea to God for deliverance. While being persecuted, he cried out to God to vindicate him by bringing vengeance on his enemies.

142:1-7 ***Poured out my complaint:*** This is an intimate supplication on the part of the psalmist. He was not apprehensive about making known his complaints to the Lord. He knew that God knew his life. He knew that God knew that his enemies had sought to trap him. ***No man who would know me:*** This is the common situation in which a leader finds himself. When the wicked seek to ensnare a leader verbally, others will not associate with him. Thus the leader for God must depend, as the psalmist, on God for his help. ***You are my refuge:*** Those who would stand for that which is right will often find themselves standing with God alone. For those who seek only to be led, they often do not have the courage to stand for that which is right. They seek only to conform to the masses. But if people need to be led to be close to God, then those who seek to have the approval of others can never lead. The unrighteous people they lead will always keep them from going in the direction to which God wants His people led. ***Out of prison:*** It was not that the psalmist was literally in prison. His prison was his separation from his companions. These were the multitudes from which he was separated because they needed to be led to God. Once delivered from the onslaught of those who were slanderously persecuting him, he would again be surrounded with companions. That is, once the people realized that the slanderous leaders were leading them in the wrong direction, then they would accept the righteous leadership of the psalmist.

Chapter 143
DELIVERANCE & GUIDANCE

In this penitential psalm the psalmist asks for mercy, not law. The penitent psalmist made a determined effort to submit to the will of God. However, he knew that he could not keep

God's law perfectly. He thus asked for God's deliverance from sin through His grace. Being delivered from his sin, he then committed himself to God's guidance.

143:1-6 The psalmist was pleading to God, knowing that God would be faithful in His answer. ***No living man be justified:*** He sought justice that was filled with grace and mercy, for he knew that no man stood justified before God. All have sinned (Rm 3:9,10,23; 11:32; 1 Jn 1:10). Neither by efforts to keep law perfectly, nor by meritorious works, could one stand justified before God. Therefore, without God's mercy, the psalmist did not want to be summoned to God for judgment. ***Dwell in darkness:*** Sheol was a place of darkness in death. ***Overwhelmed ... desolate:*** In this life the psalmist was suffering as in death. He was faint in his heart and grew numb from the oppression of his enemies.

143:7-12 The psalmist knew that in repentance there must be a commitment to live the repentant life. Repentance demanded God's direction. He knew that he had to bring forth fruit that manifested repentance (See comments 2 Co 7:10). ***Speedily:*** Before he died, he wanted a response from God. ***In the morning:*** In the spiritual morning of reaping the results of God's grace, one understands grace and mercy. It is thus in this morning that one is delivered from the despair that results from sin. ***I flee to You:*** Such should be the move of all those who would seek the forgiveness of God. God is a refuge to all those who would seek His comfort. But in order to find His comfort, one must come to Him in repentance. ***Teach me:*** When one seeks to live within the comfort of God, he seeks to be obedient to the word of God. ***Revive me:*** In order to be revived, one must ask God to *"cause me to hear"* (vs 8), *"cause me to know"* (vs 8), *"deliver me"* (vs 9), and *"teach me"* (vs 10). This concluding plea is the result of relinquishing oneself to God. One is revived only when he allows God to take control of the totality of his life. Without total submission, there is no revival. ***I am Your servant:*** This final imprecatory request should be considered in the context of the king being the anointed of God. Those who had set themselves against the anointed king of God had set themselves against God.

Chapter 144
RESCUE OF A HAPPY PEOPLE

This is a kingly psalm that focuses on national prosperity. It is a psalm that speaks of the social foundation upon which a healthy nation rests, and thus the foundation for joy among the people.

144:1,2 ***Strength ... goodness ... high tower ... deliverer ... shield:*** God should be all this in the life of a godly soldier for national Israel (ch 18). If one depends on God for these things, certainly he has established himself in the trust of God. When the soldiers of Israel went forth to battle, they did not go forth for carnal means. They went forth to defend the purpose of God through Israel. It was through Israel that God would bring the Savior into the world, and thus it was necessary that Israel survive as a nation. Though the Israelites did not know this during the time of their existence, it was enough to know that for some reason God had chosen them from among the nations of the world for a special purpose. They did know that they were the perpetuation of the promise that God made to Abraham, that through his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gn 12:1-4).

144:3-10 ***A mere breath:*** The life of man is frail and short. We exist for a brief time, and then pass away. Our great grandchildren will forget our names. ***Mountains ... smoke:*** Volcanic eruptions. ***Stretch forth Your hand:*** The psalmist sought to be delivered from the oppression of wicked nations who overcame Israel as a flood of waters. ***Hand of falsehood:*** These were those who worked treachery and deceit. ***New song:*** The psalmist was confident that God would deliver him out of the hands of those who sought his destruction. For this reason, he would sing a song of victory. ***Salvation:*** As in the context here and in other psalms, this word is used in reference to being saved from death or oppression.

144:11-15 These verses explain the well-being of the nation of Israel. What is portrayed is the well-being of the sons and daughters, which is a sign of the future of the nation. If the youth grow up feeling secure in the care of parents and God, then their future confidence in the nation will guarantee the future existence of the nation. ***Daughters as corner stones:*** The young daughters became young mothers who trained their children in godliness. Thus the daughters become the corner stones that determined the direction in which the nation would morally go (See comments Ti 2:3-5). ***Our barns be full:*** Israel was a rural culture of farmers. Their wealth as a nation was not in their cities, but in the rural communities that were scattered throughout the land of Palestine. In this context, the wealth of the nation was based on full barns, not large bank accounts. If the barns were full, then the crops were good and their livestock was breeding. The result was the increase of their flocks. Because Palestine was situated in the major trade route of ancient times, they could sell their produce to passing traders who traveled to and fro between the northern and southern nations of the world. This trading brought in great sums of wealth for the nation of Israel as a whole. ***No breaking in:*** When everyone is prosperous, there is no need for thievery. ***Nor going out:*** There would be no need to go to other nations for help or into the captivity of those who would conquer the land. ***No complaining:*** Knowing their history of complaint, a full barn would leave no reason for the people to complain to God for sustenance. When the physical needs of the people are satisfied, there would be national security, and thus a happy nation. ***Whose God is the Lord:*** This is the foundation upon which a nation is truly happy (Pv 14:34). In the case of Israel, their prosperity was evidence that they were serving God, since He had promised them that He would bless them if they continued in His will. However, if they forsook His will, they would suffer God's discipline.

Chapter 145
GOODNESS & POWER OF GOD

This was a psalm that was commonly used in the daily prayers of Jewish liturgy. It was an important psalm because it focused on the greatness of God and His love for those who worshiped Him. The reverence that is given to God not only came from Israel, but from all people. God is to be glorified by all humanity because of His care for His people.

145:1-7 ***Every day:*** This psalm portrays the beauty of the daily life of those who worship God (Rm 12:1,2). The devoted saint continually has the praise of God on his mind. The righteous speak of God's miraculous works that He has done throughout history. They will speak of the good that God has done for His people. A song of praise will continually be on the lips of the righteous.

145:8,9 ***Gracious:*** The Lord is favorable to His people. ***Compassion:*** He is sympathetic and kind. In reference to their needs, He provides. God is slow in bringing judgment down on His children who sin. This picture of God is certainly different than the one that is portrayed by those who conceive of gods after their own imagination. The God of the Bible is one of love, compassion and mercy. This does not mean that God will not bring judgment on those who continue in sin. It does, however, mean that God is not mean or unjust. He is not as those gods of men who seek every opportunity to punish man.

145:10-16 **Works ... acts:** See comments Psalm 8 (Rm 1:20). ***Your kingdom:*** The sovereignty of God is manifested through His creation. All that exists manifests the greatness of God and His creative power and majesty. ***Everlasting kingdom:*** The emphasis here, as in other places where the word "everlasting" is used, emphasizes the permanency of that which is modified by the word "everlasting." In this case it is the sovereignty of God's kingdom reign. It is sure and steadfast. It will not go away. The Son of God ascended to the right hand of God in order to assume this kingdom reign. He is presently reigning over all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22). ***Upholds all who fall:*** God is there for us. Though He is majestic in power and awesome in comparison to His creation, He considers His people and is there when they fall.

145:17-21 ***Righteous ... holy:*** God is just in all His work with man. His dealings are not as men who make judgments from preconceived and prejudicial motives. ***The Lord is near:*** He is not distant. If one feels distant from God, it is not that God has gone away, but that we have gone away from Him. We only go away from Him in our thinking. He is always there. No one can ever physically move away from God. ***Fulfill the desire:*** He will come to the aid of those who obey Him. He will save them out of danger and preserve them. It is because of this protective work of God that His servants praise Him. The relationship that this psalmist explained concerning God's closeness with His people brings comfort and encouragement to those who are conscious of His presence. What a great joy it is to feel that in God we live, move and have our being (See comments At 17:28).

Chapter 146
GOD IS OUR HELPER

Beginning with this psalm, the remainder of the psalms focus on praise to God. These psalms are a doxology to all the psalms. Throughout these psalms there are no petitions or cries for the fulfillment of personal needs. These are songs of praise. In this psalm, the psalmist praises God as our help because He is able to come to our aid.

146:1-4 As the first of the hallelujah psalms in adoration of God, this psalm begins with a praise of the Lord who helps. The psalmist committed himself to the praise of the Lord because only He is to be our help. In crises that involve our mortality, princes (rulers) of this world cannot help, for they too are mortal. All men of this world are destined to die and return to the dust of the earth. ***His thoughts perish:*** At death, the thoughts of mortal man cease to be an advantage to those who are alive.

146:5-10 ***Happy:*** Those who put their trust in God are assured of His help. Their happiness is based on an undoubting faith in the God who created all things. If God can create, then surely He can take care of those who put their trust in Him. ***Keeps truth:*** God does not break His covenants with those who are faithful to Him. ***Executes judgment:*** He vindicates the righteous, and thus frees them from their oppression. ***Eyes of the blind:*** Through truth, men come to know God. ***Bowed down:*** Those who are humbled through grief are encouraged. ***Preserves the foreigners:*** Sojourners are protected. ***Way of the wicked:*** He turns the wickedness that they would render to others upon their own heads. ***Reign forever:*** The certainty of His sovereignty guarantees what was stated in this psalm concerning the word of God in the lives of man.

Chapter 147
JERUSALEM'S RESTORATION & PROSPERITY

This psalm focuses on the work of God in His creation, which work is a benefit to all that exists. The theme would be that God is not distant from His creation, but works among His creation for the preservation of that which He brought into existence (See Hb 1:3). The reason for the praise would be the immediate historical occasion that Israel was returning from captivity in order to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

147:1-6 ***Praise is the right thing to do:*** In view of all that God has done and continues to do in His creation, it is reasonable to give Him praise. ***Builds up Jerusalem:*** In view of the gathering of Israel, the historical setting of this psalm would be the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity after 536 B.C. ***Gathers ... outcasts of Israel:*** See comments Ezra & Nehemiah. The Jews had been taken into Assyrian (722/21 B.C.) and Babylonian (586 B.C.) captivity. They were dispersed among the nations. The psalmist gives credit to God for gathering a remnant of all twelve tribes in order to return the remnant to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and city. ***Casts the wicked down:*** As captives, the Israelites were cast down by the wicked, but in their return from captivity, the wicked were cast down.

147:7-11 The power of God is manifested throughout nature (Compare ch 8; Rm 1:20). God is to be praised for the continuity of vegetation that provides food for the living. Though man may take pride in the things of this world that exalt his power, the psalmist proclaimed that the righteous should take pride in the power of God that works in the world.

147:12-20 ***Bars of your gates:*** The security of the nation was in the strength of Jerusalem to withstand the enemy. God strengthened Israel and was able to defend her against all her enemies. They would not be able to break through the gates

into the city. ***His word runs:*** For moral development, God's word was proclaimed to His people who readily received it. The fact that they received the word of God is evidence that they are the people of God. ***Snow ... ice ... cold:*** Man succumbs to the cold, but God controls all that controls the cold. He can simply speak a word and the snow and ice melt away. ***Shows His word to Jacob:*** Of all the blessings that Israel received that preserved them throughout their generations, God's revealed word was the greatest. The writing of the Pentateuch (Gn – Dt) by Moses carried Israel through to the time of the Christ. They were blessed with the oracles of God so that they need not to depend on the oral will of God as did the nations (See comments Rm 3:1,2). For this reason alone, Israel should sing praises to God.

Chapter 148
GOD PRAISED BY THE CREATION

This psalm is a praise of God from His creation. From angelic beings to every molecule of creation, God is praised for His majesty. This is only a natural response from the creation. The Creator is greater than the creation, and thus that which originated from the Creator would naturally praise the source of its existence.

148:1-6 Praise is commanded to come from all spiritual beings who dwell in the heavenly realm. Even the physical sun, moon and stars that dwell in the heavens are to bring forth praise to God. The personification of the sun, moon and stars exemplifies the majesty of God and the fact that it is right that only He be praised, for He was the creator of all. We should not miss the point in these psalms of praise. And the point is that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked through God the Son to create the worlds and all life (See comments Cl 1:16). This praise that originates from the created world, therefore, is praise of the preincarnate Christ through whom all things were created. ***He commanded:*** It was Jesus who commanded and the heavens were created (Cl 1:16; see comments Gn 1).

148:7-14 All that exists is called on by the psalmist to give praise to the Lord. The psalmist's reason for calling on all creation to praise the Creator is only reasonable. The life and the created world give praise to the One who brought all things into existence. ***His name:*** The very name of God affirms His existence, and thus His right to be praised by those who recognize His existence. Those who are ignorant of the existence of God are driven to praise Him. It is for this reason that the name of God should be proclaimed among the nations.

Chapter 149
PRAISE OF GOD BY HIS PEOPLE

Verses 1-4 are a call to worship God. However, verses 5-9 are a call for God's judgment to come upon those who have dealt wickedly with His people. In continuing a familiar theme throughout the psalms, the psalmist reassures the people of God, and warns their enemies, that one should take great caution in setting themselves against God's people.

149:1-4 ***Assembly of the saints:*** God's people, whether Israelites scattered throughout Palestine, or His church scattered throughout the world, are the assembly of His saints. The phraseology defines that the word "assembly" ("congregation") does not refer to God's people coming together into a particular location. It is the assembly who have gathered before the Lord by their obedience to His word, regardless of where they are individually located. We are thus a part of God's assembly if we are alone on a mountain bowed down in giving praise to Him in His glory, or in some village deep in the jungle. Where we are located does not separate us from either God or His assembly. ***In his Maker:*** Because God created the nation of Israel, Israel should thus worship her Maker. Because God created all things, therefore, all things should worship the Creator. ***Dance ... timbrel:*** Praise was released through dance because of the joy that filled the heart of the worshiper. Though God is not influenced by the noise of the innate instruments of man, the use of such in praise to God was an expression of praise by those who sought to worship Him (See comments Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16; compare Am 5:23).

149:5-9 We do not know the historical setting of this psalm, though it is evident that Israel was delivered from some enemy. Their victory was their vindication, and thus their opportunity to once again give praise to God. Through the proxy of His work in the army of Israel, God brought vengeance on those who oppressed His people. Those who had put Israel in chains and fetters, were themselves brought down to the same by the army of other nations.

Chapter 150
PRAISE GOD

This is a fitting psalm of conclusion for all the psalms. Its total focus on the praise of God manifests the adoration of God's people of His majesty. Because God is the creator of all things, commandments to worship Him are not needed. When one comes to the realization that God exists, and that He created all things, one is humbled in worship of Him. However, lest one worship in vain, he must go to the word of God in order to determine the true worship that God requires (Jn 4:24). Worship that is according to the desires of men is not worship according to the will of God. The word of God must always be our guide in determining how to worship God.

150:1-6 We would conclude that this was a psalm of David simply because of David's love for instruments of music. Such instrumental music was introduced into the temple sacrifices in order to bring a calming atmosphere to the area while the animals were being slaughtered for sacrifice. David originally brought in the instruments, therefore, not for the purpose of worship of God, but for the purpose of developing a pleasant atmosphere for the priest during the time when sacrifices were being prepared. In the context of this psalm, however, the psalmist desired that every breath of man be used to either sing or play to the praise of God. The instruments that are mentioned here were wind instruments as the trumpet and flutes, stringed instruments as the psaltery and harp, and the percussion instruments that included the timbrel and cymbals. The noise from such instruments does not appeal to the senses that we suppose God has, for God is spirit and not approached through the senses of man. The instruments, therefore, ap-

pealed to men. David introduced the instruments because he was a person who enjoyed them. He did not introduce them because they appealed to God. God on the contrary, seeks the melody of our hearts (See comments Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16). The praise of God should be such on the hearts of His people who cannot contain their worship. Praise of God is the natural expression of those who recognize God as their Creator. It is natural for believers in God to worship.

Proverbs

WRITER

Solomon is given credit for writing chapters 1-29. Agur, the son of Jaken, wrote chapter 30, and Lemuel and his mother wrote chapter 31. Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba (2 Sm 12:24). The name Solomon means "peaceful." Nathan, the prophet, gave him the name Jedidiah, which means "beloved of the Lord" (2 Sm 12:24,25). Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs (1 Kg 4:29-34; see 1 Kg 3:3-14). He also wrote Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, and Psalms 72 & 127. The recording of his wisdom in proverbs came from God as wisdom for daily living in Israel (1 Kg 3:11,12).

Solomon began his reign around 970 B.C. His reign resulted in some great economic and national accomplishments for the nation of Israel. He built the temple (1 Kg 5, 6). He also built the palace for the king (1 Kg 7:1-12). One of his greatest accomplishments was the economic development of the nation (1 Kg 10:14-23; 2 Ch 9:10-27). In reference to his political developments, the borders of Israel reached their greatest extent during his reign (1 Kg 4:21). After reigning forty years, his kingship came to an end (1 Kg 11:42). However, within five years after his death, Israel was divided into the northern and southern kingdoms.

Solomon was known as one of the greatest kings of Israel because he brought the nation to the zenith of its economic power (See 1 Kg 3:16-28; 4:29-34). However, he also introduced within the society of Israel a moral and religious culture that eventually led to the downfall of Israel. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. He set a wrong example for the people by marrying foreign women who brought their religious beliefs into the culture of Israel. These wives turned his heart to idolatry (1 Kg 11:1-9), and thus he led Israel on a path to idolatrous religion (1 Kg 12:10). He was the greatest king of Israel who brought the nation to its greatest economic strength. But he was also the greatest polygamist and religiously compromising king who implemented the moral decay that eventually led to the division of the nation, and eventual captivity.

DATE

Since most of the proverbs were written by Solomon, they would have been written during his reign from 970 to 930 B.C. The collection of all proverbs into one book took place at a later date. The collection that we have in the Bible was finalized no later than 400 B.C. We have what God wanted us to have in reference to Psalms.

BOOK

Proverbs receives its name from the nature of its content. It is a book of wisdom that was written in proverbs. A proverb is a moral truth or statement of wisdom that is written in a concise arrangement of one or two lines. It is an allegorical saying that conveys the meaning of a whole story or principle of social behavior.

Because each proverb expresses a principle of life and moral conduct, the book was not written in a narrative form. The proverbs were written as individual Hebrew parallelisms (See intro. to Ps). The literary structure of a parallelism is that most lines of the proverbial statement are either antithetical or explanatory of one another. In Proverbs, the two-line statements of the proverbs were usually two contrasting thoughts. In this literary style, a proverb was a short pithy saying that expressed wisdom in reference to behavior from both a positive and negative perspective.

Proverbs is a book of wisdom that is directed to a great extent to young people (1:2,5). The collection of the proverbs was made for the purpose of providing the wisdom of God for the posterity of Israel from generation to generation. If the Israelites would behave themselves after the moral principles of the proverbs, their future would be guaranteed. The same can be said of every civilization of the world. If a person will allow the moral principles of Proverbs to guide his life, then his future will be bright because of godly character.

We must interpret the Proverbs with the understanding that the wisdom was given on the foundation of our fear of God. In the context of Proverbs, the fear of God would be defined as obedience to God's commandments. The proverbs were given as wisdom for living in the present world according to the will of God. The proverbs are based on the principles of the law of God, and thus express wisdom in how to carry out these principles in one's daily living.

Wisdom For Godly Living
(1:1 – 9:18)

Outline: (1) Purpose and theme (1:1-7), (2) Turn from violence (1:8-19), (3) Focus on wisdom (1:20-33), (4) Rewards of wisdom (2:1-22), (5) Blessings of wisdom (3:1-35), (6) Supremacy of wisdom (4:1-27), (7) Advice on marriage (5:1-23), (8) Various warnings (6:1-19), (9) Adultery (6:20 – 7:27), (10) Excellence of wisdom (8:1-36), (11) Contrast of wisdom and foolishness (9:1-18)

Chapter 1

PURPOSE & THEME

1:1-4 ***Proverbs of Solomon:*** In the history of Israel from the time of the kings, Solomon was the one to whom Israelites turned for wisdom. Thus the book begins with giving credit to Solomon for his wisdom. However, not all the proverbs that compose the collection which we call Proverbs were written by Solomon. ***Proverbs:*** This is from the Hebrew word *mashal*, which means a pithy saying or ethical teaching that expresses a truth concerning living. ***To know wisdom:*** This was the purpose for which the proverbs were collected into one book. This is a collection of inspired statements of wisdom that were given for the betterment of one's life, and thus the betterment of society. The impartation of wisdom in the book is for the purpose of guiding young people in godly behavior or ethical relationships in society. This is the wisdom that should be followed by all young people. If one unfortunately grew up as an orphan, or without godly parents, then this is the book to learn parental advice from God. ***Simple:*** This would be the person who is opposite the one who accepts and implements in his life the wisdom that is given in the book. The word does not refer to one who is mentally incapable of comprehending and applying the principles of wisdom. Reference is to the one who refuses to allow his life to be directed by wisdom from God. This is the person who is a victim of himself. Because in his folly, he does not seek guidance from others.

1:5-7 ***Hear and will increase learning:*** The first definition of the wise is to learn and apply wisdom continually. The wise person will seek sources for learning. He will not close his mind to learning or be arrogant in what he knows. He will allow himself to be challenged in what he thinks and how he behaves. Wise people listen more than they speak. ***Fear of the Lord:*** Fear of God is the foundation upon which learning takes place (Ps 111:10). This fear leads to listening to God and obeying His commandments. Those who do not fear God will seek and respond to learning that will lead them away from God. As in Psalms, the phrase "fear of the Lord" means obedience to His will. ***Beginning of knowledge:*** Recognition of the existence and authority of God in our lives is the foundation upon which all learning should take place. ***Fools despise wisdom:*** This will be the definition of the fool in Proverbs. This is the person who rejects that which will better his life and help in his relationships with others. The fool, therefore, would never be reading from and learning the proverbs of this book. Fools reject and are indifferent to instruction that comes from God. Their focus is on continuing as they are living in the futility of their spiritual lives.

TURN FROM VIOLENCE

1:8,9 In order to avoid calamity in one's life, one must first seek the counsel of God, and then follow the instructions of one's parents. ***Hear:*** This is to obey or follow. ***Instruction:*** Compare Ex 12:26-28; Dt 6:6,7. ***Do not forsake:*** The assumption is that the father and mother have performed their duty as good parents. They have instructed their children in the ways of God and imparted wisdom to them in order that they be able to function well in society. ***Ornament:*** If a person continues to follow after the instructions of God and his parents, then his righteous behavior will attract the attention of others as adornments draw the attention of beholders.

1:10-19 In contrast to the righteous behavior of those who follow after God and parents, is the way of those who reject wisdom. This is the way of the sinner. In Proverbs, this is the way of the fool. ***If sinners entice you:*** The appeal of the sinner is first to one's desire to be a part of the crowd. Our desire to be accepted by others often leads us to join with those who seek only evil. One of the first indications of a wise person is his confidence in himself to make judgments concerning right and wrong, before he considers joining with others in order to consider them his companions. One should never allow others to draw oneself away from wisdom and God. ***Come ... let us ... lurk:*** Those who are evil are aggressive in carrying out their schemes to cause harm to others for the sake of gain. The definition of an evil person is one who has no consideration for the labors of others, and thus seeks to steal and kill. The evil person is inwardly antisocial for he cannot cohabit with others. Social order can exist only when each citizen respects the rights and possessions of others. By inflicting others through theft and bloodshed, the wicked person reaps what he sows. Society will render to him that which he has inflicted on society. He will reap what he sows.

FOCUS ON WISDOM

1:20-33 In this context wisdom is personified, that is, wisdom speaks and acts as a person. Wisdom becomes the teacher. ***Chief place:*** Wisdom takes her place at primary places from which people can hear her instruction. ***Simple ones:*** These are not those who are intellectually challenged, but those who have no moral conscience. ***Scoffers:*** Those who mock wisdom and are defiant or rebellious to the ways of God. ***Fools:*** Those who are defiant and against God's instructions. The simple ones are scoffers and fools. ***Turn yourselves at my rebuke:*** They should repent and turn to the body of truth that was preached (See Jr 3:12-14,22; 4:1; see comments Mt 12:41). ***Laugh at your calamity:*** This is not a reference to one personally rejoicing in the calamity of others. It is wisdom being vindicated because of the calamity into which the simple, scoffers and fools have fallen because they have rejected wisdom. ***Comes as a whirlwind:*** The results of bad judgments and rejection of wisdom come quickly. They come as the destruction of a storm. ***Fruit:*** See comments Gl 6:7,8. ***Backsliding of the simple:*** Those children who turn away from the instruction of their parents will reap the consequences of their rebellion. ***Self-assurance of fools:*** Those who are arrogant in their own ways are on a path to self-de-

struction. Those who arrogantly think they know everything about what they are doing, will rebel against the instruction of their parents. ***Secure:*** Security, and thus happiness, comes only when a person is confident in his obedience to the will of God. And since the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, then one finds happiness in life only when one fears God and keeps His commandments.

Chapter 2
REWARDS OF WISDOM

2:1-5 The urgent appeal is that youth eagerly accept and treasure wisdom. Because of their respect for God, they must apply the principles of wisdom to their lives. These words call for total commitment to the instruction of God. With the same zeal with which a person would give to find a hidden treasure, he should apply in seeking the knowledge of God. The best thing young people can do to live a great life is to study their Bibles.

2:6-8 If one truly seeks God, he will find Him (Compare Jn 17:3). If a person is sincere in his quest for God, he will begin to understand the fear of God, and thus submit his life to the will of God. The result of one's quest for God, therefore, results in receiving wisdom, knowledge and understanding that become protection for those who seek to be preserved in life (Ps 58:11; 84:11).

2:9-19 There are great social benefits to following after the instructions of God. ***Preserve you:*** No greater moral instruction can be given than that which comes from God. God did not place within man the ability to establish his own moral standards of conduct. He gave man a conscience, but conscience must be controlled and guided. It must be controlled by a divine standard that is best for human coexistence. Though men may reject the wisdom of God and follow after their own counsels, such counsels will lead to social chaos. ***Deliver you:*** In order to be delivered from moral standards and practices that are evil, one must seek wisdom from God. ***Rejoice to do evil:*** Society will develop moral standards that conform to the desires of men, but man's standards are often contrary to the will of God. Stealing from the rich may cause rejoicing according to the standards of some men, but it is evil in the sight of God. ***Ways of darkness:*** See 4:19; Dt 28:29; Ps 82:5; Is 59:9. ***Crooked:*** There are ways that seem right to men, but are crooked when measured with the standard of God's word. ***From the immoral woman:*** This is the woman who does not have the moral standards of God. One should not bring himself into a sexual relationship with those who do not live by the standards of God's word. The immoral woman is the adulterous woman who lures the young Israelite man away from his wife in order to commit adultery with him. Since Israel was located in the primary trading route of the ancient world, we can only imagine how many wives of traders passed through the farming communities of Israel, luring young Israelite men into committing adultery. The practice of committing adultery became so accepted, that many sections of Proverbs are directed toward the alluring dangers of immoral women. These women were adulterous women who sought to ruin young men by luring them into sexual immorality. ***Flatters with her words:*** One should not fall victim to the appeal of women who seek to lead one into sexual immorality (5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27; 9:13-18; Jr 23:10,14; Hs 4:14).

2:20-22 ***Dwell in the land:*** There is prophecy in this statement. If Israel continued in the way of God, the nation would continue to dwell in the promised land (Ex 20:12; Lv 25:18-24; Ps 37:9-11). However, Solomon went after the gods of his foreign wives and allowed those women and their gods to turn his heart from total commitment to God. As the leader of Israel, therefore, he condoned the practice of marriage to foreign women who eventually led to the extraction of Israel from the land of promise by the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

Chapter 3
BLESSINGS OF WISDOM

3:1-10 ***Do not forget my law:*** These verses are an urgent plea that the son not forget the instruction of his father (See Ex 12:26,27; Dt 6:4-6). Society must be preserved by the instruction of the parents. But the posterity of the parents, the next generation, must give heed to the parents' instruction. Societies are preserved when one generation passes on to the next generation moral principles that guide society. ***Length of days:*** See 4:10; Gn 25:8; Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16; 22:7. ***Write them:*** Those who would reap the blessings of a godly life will study the word of God and commit its principles to memory. However, knowledge of the word of God is not fruitful in one's life if its principles do not mold one's heart (Compare Ex 13:9; Dt 6:8,9). ***Do not lean on your own understanding:*** When a succeeding generation rejects the moral principles of the parents, the generation will create its own moral principles. Wisdom is when one realizes that he cannot depend on his own moral principles. Wisdom is knowing that one must reach outside himself in order to discover those things that lead to a better life. We cannot become a law unto ourselves. ***Acknowledge Him:*** Only the principles of God are eternal, and thus they are the only guarantee to a good life. ***Direct your paths:*** If one would trust in the word of God for guidance, God will clear the way (Is 40:3; 45:13). ***Health:*** The benefit of committing oneself to God is both preservation of one's health through a positive mental attitude, as well as God's blessings through fruitful crops. These were the promises of God to Israel if they remained faithful to Him while living in the land of promise. ***With your possessions:*** The godly person is not possessed by possessions, but uses his possessions to the glory of God (See comments 3 Jn 2). ***Firstfruits:*** In the farming community of Israel, the firstfruits were to be given to God as a thanksgiving for the whole harvest to come.

3:11-20 ***Do not despise the chastening:*** The reality of life is that the poor are not blessed with riches. There are always poor people in society. The rich are not always cursed with bad health and the loss of their riches. But the righteous must understand that riches do not define whether one is righteous before God. Those who are suffering from calamities of life must continue to understand that God has created and placed man in the best of all possible environments for the development of personalities for eternal dwelling with one another.

For this reason, the righteous who understand the purpose of the world can rejoice in their trials (See comments Js 1:1,2). The righteous, therefore, do not complain of unfair treatment when they are allowed by God to undergo the calamities of life. They understand that God is in control of all things, and that eventually all calamity will cease to exist. ***Whom the Lord loves:*** Calamity may either be the result of living in an environment of wickedness, natural catastrophes, or the direct manifestation of God's love when He allows us to suffer the consequences of our own foolishness. Whatever the situation, we must assume that God continues to love us. ***Happy:*** Happy is the man who understands the purpose for the existence of the world, that it was created for the purpose of morally preparing people for eternal dwelling. ***Wisdom ... understanding:*** The experience of Solomon's life illustrated this fact. When he became king, he did not ask for gold and silver. He asked for wisdom and understanding. And through his wisdom and understanding he was able to amass great gold and silver. ***She:*** The personification of wisdom exalts wisdom as one who would bring great blessings to life. She brings wealth to those who follow after her. She has the power to prolong life and give one honor. She can lead one in a pleasant and peaceful life. ***Tree of life:*** Since the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, then those who wisely obey God's word will partake of the truth that gives eternal life. ***Founded the earth:*** The creation of the world was the result of God's wisdom and understanding. Out of nothing He created the best of all possible environments in which one could dwell. Sin brought chaos into the world, and thus through our grasping for and retention of God's wisdom and understanding of this fallen world, He can bring order to our lives. When we realize that this fallen world will not continue, then we will prepare ourselves for a new heaven and earth that is yet to come.

3:21-35 This final section of the chapter focuses on things to do in order to enjoy life. All the principles that are set forth here are principles for human relationships within society. They are principles of wisdom that lead to one's peaceful cohabitation with others. If practiced, these principles will bring peace of mind, and thus make it possible to sleep in peace at night. These principles are the following: ***Do not be afraid:*** One should not fear while living in a society of wickedness. Fully trusting in God takes away fear. Fearing God more than man diminishes our fear of man. ***Do not withhold good:*** Pay your bills. Lend to those who need help. Do good to all men (Gl 6:10). If we do good, we will be happy (Jn 13:17). ***Do not devise evil:*** If one's neighbor dwells peacefully by you, do not generate strife with him. We must always work with a positive outlook on life. ***Do not strive:*** If one does not give you a reason to strive, then control yourself. One must not be contentious. We must be peacemakers, not troublemakers. ***Do not envy:*** If your neighbor is wealthy, do not covet his possessions. If he gains his wealth through evil means, then do not follow his means to gain wealth. We must be content with the things we have. ***Abomination to the Lord:*** When someone was an abomination to the Lord, he could not reside in His presence. Every abominable thing will eventually be destroyed (2 Th 1:6-9), for God detests that which is abominable. ***The righteous:*** These closing statements contrast the righteous and wicked. In the contrast, the righteous have a close relationship with God, for they have accepted His counsel. They shun those things that God considers to be detestable. As a result, they are blessed and enjoy the security of His grace. They will thus inherit what is prepared for them (Rm 8:18).

Chapter 4
SUPREMACY OF WISDOM

4:1-9 In this section of verses, the father, Solomon, seeks to instill within his son the wisdom that he received from his father, David. He seeks to pass on his posterity of faith as an inheritance that was given to him by his father. ***Father ... mother:*** It is significant that both parents join in their quest to pass on to their children the heritage of faith that was within their hearts. The greatest inheritance parents can give to their children is faith (See comments 2 Tm 1:5). ***Get wisdom:*** This was an injunction to act. Both wisdom and understanding can be acquired. However, one must make a conscious decision to seek both wisdom and understanding. The first thing to do to get wisdom is to pray for wisdom from God (See comments Js 1:5). ***Her:*** Wisdom is again personified to be an individual who would bring great blessings. If as an individual, she is acquired, then she has the ability to promote and bring honor to the one who has attained and retained her (See 1:9; Ps 45:13; Is 61:10).

4:10-13 In this section, the path of wisdom is explained. This is the way of life that leads to blessing and a long life. It is a way of life where one is protected from unnecessary stumbling over his own embarrassments.

4:14-17 In contrast to the way of wisdom, the way of the wicked is filled with calamity. ***Do not sleep:*** The wicked are committed to their evil ways. They are restless until they have brought misery to the lives of others. They are selfish, and have little consideration for the lives of other people.

4:18,19 The contrast here between the righteous and wicked concludes the preceding explanation of their ways of life. The righteous bring light to life, and the wicked are a witness to darkness. The light of the righteous is as the morning light that indicates another great day. In contrast, the wicked are so engrossed in their way of life that they cannot figure out why they keep running into trouble. The truly foolish person is the one who constantly runs into trouble in life, but cannot determine that the reason he does so is because of his own foolish decisions.

4:20-27 This section of instruction is concluded with principles that lead to the abundant life. ***Ear ... eyes ... heart ... body ... mouth ... lips:*** The totality of one's being should be focused on God. We must seek God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind (See comments Mk 12:29,30). ***Guard your heart:*** In order to maintain the way of righteousness, one must be on guard. He must take heed lest he stumble because of the influence of wickedness in this world. As a person thinks in his heart, so he eventually behaves. And thus one must thoroughly examine his heart in order to bring every evil thought under control. The advantage of one living in

community with others is that it gives one the opportunity to discover the hidden characteristics of his heart as he encounters other people in a social context. In our encounters with different personalities, we have the opportunity to discover various hidden secrets of our own hearts that must be revealed and possibly corrected (See comments Mt 15:18,19; Mk 7:20-23). ***Do not turn:*** Once a person has committed himself to a course of life, he must fight to maintain that course. The first decision to make is to determine to do that which is right, regardless of the consequences. Righteous people use the word of God to determine that which is right.

Chapter 5
ADVICE ON MARRIAGE

5:1-6 These first verses deal with the fascination foolish people have with immorality. The writer urges the son to give heed to knowledge and not to sexual or emotional feelings. In this context, one may have the knowledge that something is immoral, but control of one's sexual urges must go beyond knowledge. A righteous person takes action not to commit an act of immorality. ***Immoral woman:*** This is the promiscuous woman. She is the one who speaks sweet words in order to fulfill her desire to embrace a man through her sexual appeal. In this case, she could be the wife of another man, and thus the sin about which the writer speaks is adultery (See 2:16-19). The adulteress woman presents herself in an appealing manner to her victim. But after the sin, there are bitter emotional results for those who commit the adultery. Solomon, as the son of David and Bathsheba, personally knew the result of a child being born out of an adulterous union. The son that was born as a result of the adulterous relationship between David and Bathsheba died (2 Sm 11,12; see comments Ps 51). ***Wormwood:*** This was a bitter plant. It is often figuratively used in Scripture to refer to the results of sin (Dt 29:18; Jr 9:15; Lm 3:19; Am 5:7; 6:12). ***Two-edged sword:*** Sin cuts going and coming, and thus it devours those who participate in it. Sin eventually defines our character. ***Sheol:*** In death, one went to the abode of the dead, a place of departed spirits. In this context, death and Sheol were the result of sin. ***Unstable:*** Since adultery is centered around selfishness, both parties who participate in the sin manifest themselves to be untrustworthy. Their social instability is manifested by their unfaithfulness. Both parties who engage themselves in an adulterous relationship have revealed that they are untrustworthy people.

5:7-14 There are severe consequences for immorality. ***Far from her:*** In order not to sin in a relationship with another, the best advice is to stay away from the one with whom you are tempted to sin. In this case, the son refused the instruction of his teacher, and thus gave himself in adultery to another. After the sin, he came to his senses, but it was too late. ***Almost in total ruin:*** If tried and condemned by the people, the punishment for adultery in Israel was stoning (Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22; Ez 16:40). At least in this case, the guilty parties were brought to disgrace before the people (See comments Jn 8:1-11).

5:15-23 ***Drink waters out of your own cistern:*** This was a proverbial statement that one should stay at home and receive emotional nourishment from his own wife (See Ss 4:12-15). Finding contentment in one's own marriage is the best guarantee against sexual promiscuity. Adultery would be one of the primary sins that would destroy the family structure of society. ***Your fountains dispersed:*** Reference here is possibly to bringing up children in the environment of a faithful marriage. ***The wife of your youth:*** God's plan for marriage was one man and woman in marriage for life. Monogamous relationships were the principle by which God intended that the world be populated. Polygamy was never in the plan of God, though God allowed such in the lives of some people. However, such people often paid the price for their polygamous relationships. ***Loving deer and pleasant doe:*** A man should be infatuated with his wife, so much so, that he has no desire to search for sexual satisfaction outside his home. He should cultivate a romantic relationship with his wife, and in doing so, not be tempted by any other woman who may approach him with flattering lips. ***Eyes of the Lord:*** The writer concluded by reminding those who may be tempted to commit adultery. God knows even the thoughts and intents of the heart before we commit the act. There is no secrecy before God. Even before we commit an act of sin the Lord already knows what is in our hearts.

Chapter 6
VARIOUS WARNINGS

The historical context of Proverbs was a time when moral decay, after 500 years in the land of promise, had finally started what would eventually cause the end of the nation. This end would begin within five years after the death of Solomon when the twelve tribes would be divided, ten composing the northern kingdom and two composing the southern kingdom. The north would eventually go into Assyrian captivity a little over 200 years after the majority of the proverbs were written. The Israelites of the northern tribes were taken into captivity because of their alliance with the gods of foreign nations and their moral decay that was brought into Israel through the influence of foreign nations. The seeds of this downfall began in the days of Solomon, when he, as the leader of the nation, aligned the people with foreign nations and foreign wives. The book of Proverbs is seated in the historical context of this decay. This chapter of Proverbs, therefore, focuses on points of ethical and moral decay in the area of suretyship, indolence, discord among the tribal groups, and immorality. Throughout the Proverbs, therefore, the Bible interpreter must not forget that within less than twenty years after Solomon possibly wrote most of the proverbs in the latter part of his reign, Israel divided into the northern and southern kingdoms. The northern kingdom, specifically, digressed quickly by following after the sins of Jeroboam their first king.

6:1-5 ***Become surety for your friend:*** What is stated here is not a condemnation of all surety. The civil laws of Israel made provision for making loans to others, but without interest (Ex 22:25,26; Lv 25:36,37; Dt 23:19,20). ***Friend ... stranger:*** What is under consideration here is loaning money out on a venture capital basis for profit, not charity. Such was not condoned in the law, for there are several rebukes against doing such among fellow Israelites (11:15; 17:18; 22:26,27). What is under consideration here is taking advantage of oth-

ers in their hard times in order to profit from their misfortune. ***Shaken your hand:*** Made the agreement. ***Snared:*** Trapped by your own words of promise. ***Now do this:*** If possible, seek to cancel the debt immediately. The one who borrowed the money made an impulsive decision, and thus is urged to find release from the loan as soon as possible, lest it bring him into bondage. If a debt could not be repaid, then the debtor had to submit himself in servitude to the one from whom he had borrowed the money.

6:6-11 ***You sluggard:*** Linked to the social problem of those giving out loans for profit, were those who possibly gave the loans, and thus did not have to physically work for their survival. There were those in society who were lazy in reference to physical labor (See 10:26; 13:4; 19:15; 24:30-34). Thus the writer gave the example of the diligent ant that worked continuously for survival. ***Ant:*** With diligence and foresight, the ant prepared for its existence through hard work. ***Like a prowler:*** The point was that if one does not work, poverty will pounce upon him as a prowler who secretly comes in and steals one's wealth.

6:12-15 ***Worthless person:*** Moral decay in society is the result of too many perverse people who have little concern for others. In this context, the worthless person is worthless because his perverse ways make him useless for the preservation of society. He is the one who is not constrained by moral and ethical norms that are necessary for the preservation of social order. His communication is twisted and malicious. His actions are wicked. ***Winks:*** He is not sincere. ***Speaks with his feet ... fingers:*** His restlessness reveals his insincerity and questionable motives. ***He sows discord:*** The evidence of a worthless person in society is that he generates disagreements and division through his malicious actions and speech. This is not the person who is speaking the truth, and by doing such causes division among those who have followed after error. This is the person who has little social skills by which unity can be maintained in a society where there is a great difference of opinion. He is a troublesome personality.

6:16-19 ***Seven are an abomination:*** Though sin is not limited to these seven, these seven are mentioned because they lead to the destruction of society. In the historical case of Israel, these sins led to the termination of the Israelites in the land of promise. ***Haughty eyes:*** Arrogance and pride, and thus one citizen exalting himself above others. ***Lying tongue:*** The loss of integrity, for one could not be believed. ***Innocent blood:*** This is the breakdown of security within society, both in the streets and in the courts. The life of the innocent is taken in order to preserve the life of the wicked. ***Wicked imaginations:*** Citizens plot and scheme against one another for selfish goals. When every imagination is given to evil (Gn 6:5). ***Running to mischief:*** Quick to find fault, thus having little mercy for one's fellow man. Devising schemes to hurt one's fellow man. ***Speaks lies:*** Loss of community because neighbors lose their trust of one another. Neighbor is set against neighbor for the sake of gain. ***Sows discord:*** The troublemaker who continually disturbs society by generating strife within the nation. National patriotism is replaced by patriotism to parties.

ADULTERY

6:20-35 This section of verses deals with the social problem of adultery (See 2:16-19; 5:3-11; 9:13-18). ***Father's commandment ... law of your mother:*** The guard against adultery in a society is the fidelity of a mother and father who have taught their children by their example. The instructions of the parents should be bound to the hearts of the children (Dt 6:6,7). ***Lamp ... light:*** The commandment of God is a lamp that provides light to the path of righteousness (See Ps 19:8; 119:105). ***Keep you from the evil woman:*** Staying close to the commandments of God will keep one away from the adulterous woman. ***The precious life:*** The adulterous woman would look for the young man who is at the prime of his sexual urges, and then entice him into sin. ***Fire ... hot coals:*** The answer to the two rhetorical questions of verses 27 & 28 is "No!" If one engages an adulterous woman in sexual immorality, he will be burned severely. Someone is always emotionally wounded when adultery is committed. ***People do not despise a thief:*** People can forgive a thief who is caught after he has stolen for the survival of his own family. If he is caught, he is to make full repayment of what he stole. But in the case of adultery, there is no forgiveness by the offended husband of the adulterous woman. Those who are offended by an act of adultery cannot be repaid for something they lost. ***Destroys his own soul:*** He has destroyed his integrity. He can no longer be trusted by society. He can make no restitution to correct his error. The offended husband will subsequently demand that the law be enforced, and thus the adulterers must be stoned according to the law (Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22-24).

Chapter 7

7:1-5 In the midst of moral decay, the Holy Spirit guided the writer of this chapter to give instructions to young men who might be tempted by the lure of a promiscuous wife to commit adultery. He was instructed to follow the commandments of God, and then realize the consequences of committing adultery. ***Apple of your eye:*** If one considers the word of God with great delight, then he will understand the evils surrounding adulterous relationships (See Dt 32:10; Ps 17:8). ***Write them:*** This was more than inscribing the words on a piece of paper and attaching them to one's body as a phylactery (See Dt 6:8,9). Emphasis is on attaching the principles of God's word to one's heart, and thus behaving accordingly. ***Immoral woman:*** See comments 2:16. ***Sister ... nearest kin:*** As a person would cherish his sister and nearest relative, so he should cling to the word of God.

7:6-23 ***Young man void of understanding:*** The stage is set for an adulterous affair. It is first set with a young man who is very unwise. The other party in the affair is an immoral woman bent on unfaithfulness to her husband. ***Simple ones:*** Better, "empty-headed." The young men of this case would be the ones who have no moral sense, nor respect for the word of God and their fathers. The simple ones have no moral foundation upon which to make experienced decisions. They do not realize the consequences of their actions. ***Near her corner:*** Because the young man was inexperienced in wisdom, he made himself available where he should not have

been. ***He went:*** This was his fatal decision that would change the course of his life. Adultery is not committed without life-changing consequences for both parties that are involved in the sin. ***Attire of a harlot:*** The adulteress had a plan. Though not a harlot by profession, she dressed herself in the fashion of a harlot in order to lure one who was aimless in reference to his morals. The adulteress was thus rebellious in reference to the law of God, but the young man was careless in following after her lure. ***Confident face:*** She was persuasive. ***Peace offerings:*** The sacrificial meat of the offering had to be eaten the same day, or the following day after it was killed (Lv 7:16,18). She had thus prepared her dwelling for food and adultery. ***Paid my vows:*** She was legally inconsistent. She paid her vows according to the law, but at the same time was in the process of luring a victim into committing adultery, which act was punishable by stoning. Such is the nature of legalism. One feels justified to break some laws that are considered minor, but still be considered faithful. The legalist chooses which laws to obey and which to disobey. For example, the Pharisees of Jesus' time were cautious not to use the betrayal money that was given to Judas as a contribution to the temple, but at the same time, they devised a scheme to murder Jesus. ***Ox ... bird:*** The end of both was the same. In innocence the ox went to the slaughter and the bird into the snare. So is the fate of those who may think an innocent act of adultery will not lead to fatal consequences.

7:24-27 The foolishness of some young people can be determined by their indifference toward the bad consequences of their immoral behavior. In order to protect oneself from the lure of immoral conduct, one should first take heed to the word of God. One should then not be deceived into thinking that there will be no consequences for violating the word of God. And then, one must understand that immoral behavior leads to emotional wounds and the way of death. If one does not reap what is sown in this life, then there is eternal death to face that is yet to come (See Rv 21:8).

Chapter 8
EXCELLENCE OF WISDOM

8:1-3 This is a beautiful narrative of the prize of wisdom as it is personified as one who is to be greatly desired. The young man in chapter 7 was lured into destruction by his deepest sense of sexuality. But with the same deep sense, one should be lured to wisdom by which one escapes death and discovers life. Thus in this context, personified wisdom cries out to those who should be attracted to her appealing rewards (1:20-33). ***High places ... paths ... gates:*** Wisdom cries out from places where people are and can be contacted. She cries out to be heard through the elders who sit at the gates of the city. In contrast to the adulterous woman who lurked in the dark places of the city, wisdom cries out from the most conspicuous places of the city and country.

8:4-11 ***O men:*** The call of wisdom is not to any particular social class of society. From the huts of the poor in the country to the rulers in the palaces of the city, wisdom is available for acquisition. Its acquisition is not determined by either riches or fame. She is available to all who willing seek her, and thus all men may profit from her use in daily living. ***Truth ... righteousness:*** The foundation of wisdom is truth and righteousness. Neither perverse principles nor twisted messages come forth from those who speak with wisdom. ***Plain ... right:*** If one is committed to receive wisdom, then it can be understood plainly and determined to be right for life. The principle is that those who seek wisdom will find it (See Jn 7:17). ***Better than rubies:*** That which a man possesses within himself is more valuable than that which he possesses outside himself (3:13-17; compare Mt 6:19-21).

8:12-21 ***Find out knowledge:*** With wisdom one discovers things to know, and thus wisely uses knowledge about facts, things and events. Without wisdom, one's acquisition and use of knowledge is limited. ***Fear of the Lord:*** One who loves the word of the Lord will hate that which is evil, which things include arrogant attitudes and evil behavior. ***Riches ... with me:*** Solomon did not pray for riches. He prayed for wisdom and understanding (1 Kg 3:5-12). But when blessed with wisdom and understanding, he was able to gain the riches. The fruit of wisdom, therefore, gives one the mental equipment by which to deal with the affairs of this life in order to gain the sustenance of life. ***Better than gold:*** The one who seeks wisdom for financial gain has missed the point. If riches are the motive for acquiring wisdom, then one has judged himself to be unwise. ***I will fill their treasuries:*** A filled treasury is the serendipity of wisdom, not its goal. We must keep in mind that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Some of the richest people in the world would be considered fools in the sight of God, simply because they have no fear of God. Riches, therefore, do not determine if one is wise. Some of the wisest people in the world are God fearing individuals who live in poverty because of social circumstances.

8:22-31 The personification in this section of scriptures defines the essence of wisdom. The magnificence of wisdom is so sublime that some have assumed that the writer transitioned in this context from speaking of wisdom to revealing the pre-incarnate Word of God (See Jn 1:1-4; Cl 1:15-18). However, there is no contextual reason to assume this simply because we are given no indication that the personification of wisdom in the preceding verses has changed to be taken literally as a divine entity of the Godhead in the context of these verses. The writer is contrasting the lure of sin in chapter 7, to the lure of wisdom in this chapter. Therefore, we must conclude that he has taken the personification of wisdom in chapter 7 to a new level. This new level is wisdom's existence in the mind of God before the creation of the world. ***The Lord possessed me:*** By assuming that the writer, without notifying us the readers, has transitioned to a description of Christ, some have erroneously argued that the word "possess" (Hb., *qanah*) should be translated "create," as it is used in a few other passages (Dt 32:6; Ps 139:13). They thus conclude that Christ was created. However, there is no justification for this translation in this context. Neither is there any textual justification to transition from the writer's personification of wisdom in the preceding verses of 1-21 to a personalization of Christ in verses 22-31. A consistent understanding of this context is that wisdom existed with God before the world was created, and thus existed before the

existence of gold and silver. Thus wisdom is to be loved more than gold and silver (treasures) because it existed before either were created. ***When there were no depths, I was brought forth:*** The existence of wisdom could not be determined by the nothingness that "existed" before the creation of the world. When we observe that which has been created, we can see the wisdom of God. We can witness wisdom in the created world (Ps 104:24), as well as in the life that was created by God (See Rm 1:20). In this sense, therefore, wisdom was brought forth out of the mind of God through its manifestation in that which was created. In this context, therefore, wisdom was the master builder who designed the cosmos. And when we behold what has been created, we see the eternal existence of the wisdom of God (See Ps 8 & 19).

8:32-36 These verses are the conclusion to what has just been presented by wisdom. Her invitation is that she should be received because of her benefits in life, and because of her existence before the creation of the world. ***Love death:*** See Dt 11:26-28; 30:19,20. Those who find wisdom through the fear of God and keeping of His commandments will find blessing in this life, and in the world to come, eternal life.

Chapter 9
CONTRAST BETWEEN WISDOM & FOOLISHNESS

This chapter concludes the first section of Proverbs. Within this chapter is a contrast made between wisdom (1-6) and foolishness (13-18). Both are personified in order that they make their invitations to those who seek either a righteous or wicked way of life.

9:1-6 ***House:*** In this context wisdom is personified as a hostess who makes her appeal to those who seek to be prudent. ***Seven pillars:*** The house of wisdom is strongly built. ***Mixed her wine:*** Wine that was mixed with spices. Everything was done to lure guests into the dwelling of wisdom. ***Simple:*** These are those unexperienced in society. Because of their naivety and lack of wisdom, they are easily led astray. In the contexts of chapters 1-9 we could assume that reference is to young people who are faced with many decisions and influences in their maturing years. ***Come:*** Compare Is 55:1-5; Mt 22:1-10. ***Forsake:*** A conscious decision must be made to seek wisdom.

9:7-12 This interlude deals with those who reject wisdom, and specifically, the word of God. In the context of righteousness, this would be the one who rejects the way of God. ***Insults for himself:*** Unwise people are determined by their reaction to those who correct them. When corrected, they scorn those who correct them, for they think that they are right in all their ways. An example of this would be the religious person who is corrected by another with the word of God. If the religious person is persistent and satisfied with his doctrine, then he will scoff at the one who corrects him from the word of God. The same is true of the traditional religionist. Since he is comfortable with his traditions, he scoffs at those who would correct him with the word of God. ***Instruction to a wise man:*** One is identified as wise by his reaction to correction. He accepts correction, realizing that through correction he gains greater wisdom. ***Beginning of wisdom:*** Wisdom begins when one is obedient to the Lord. Arrogance blocks one from receiving correction. Humility before the Lord prepares one for learning from others. ***You alone:*** One is individually responsible for his reception of wisdom (See Dt 24:16; Jr 31:30; Ez 18:4). Each person will be held accountable for his lack of knowledge of God, and thus his eternal destiny (At 17:30,31; 2 Co 5:10).

9:13-18 In this context foolishness is personified, and thus offers an invitation to all those who reject the fear of God. ***Clamorous:*** This woman is loud and diligent to invite like-minded people into her fellowship. She has no sense of shame in reference to her demeanor of life, and thus feels no guilt about inviting others to join her. ***Stolen waters are sweet:*** The wicked give the impression that life is sweet. They make this appeal to others in order to have companionship in the mire of their digression. Sin loves companionship in order to justify its existence. ***Sheol:*** The final end of those who live according to the lusts of sin is death and eternal separation from God.

Wisdom From Solomon
(10:1 – 22:16)

Outline: (1) Concepts in contrast (10:1 – 15:33), (2) Parallel concepts (16:1 – 22:16)

Throughout this section of Proverbs there is no necessary order to the statements of wisdom that are given. There are 375 two-line statements of a mosaic of wisdom that are given for daily living. Some of the statements are antithetical (See 10:1–15:33). The greater number are given as parallelisms (See 16:1–22:16). Throughout the synonymous parallelisms, the Bible student should be aware of the fact that a specific thought is given in different words of the two lines. When dealing with the arrangement of the proverbs of this section, we will be frustrated if we seek to find some order. As these proverbs are arranged in our Bible, there is no specific order or classification for them in these chapters. They were random proverbs that were collected in order to preserve the wisdom of those who initially stated them.

Chapter 10
CONCEPTS IN CONTRAST

10:1-22 These pithy statements of wisdom were a collection of sayings that came from Solomon in order to give instructions for daily living. **1** Children who follow the instructions of their parents, bring them joy. Children who rebel against the teachings of their parents cause their parents great disappointment, and thus disgrace the family name. **2** Wealth that is acquired through corrupt means will not spiritually profit one's soul (Mt 16:26), but godly living will result in eternal life. **3** God will take care of His people (Mt 6:26,33), but turn His face from the rebellious. **4** Lazy people will reap poverty because they do not work for their food. **5** Lazy children who do not work with their hands cause embarrassment for their parents. **6** Wicked people will reap what they sow (See Lv 13:45; Ml 3:7). **7** People forget the wicked when the wicked die (Ps 72:17), but the righteous live on in the hearts of those

they influenced. They do so because people cherish memories of good people. **8** Wise people accept instruction, but those who speak too much will be the victims of their own mouths. If one speaks a great deal, he will eventually say something that is wrong, or start talking much about things of which he knows little. **9** Righteous people will have the blessing of their neighbors, but the wicked will not have the support of the community. **10** The one who works with malice in his heart will continually cause trouble. Those who speak too much will eventually embarrass themselves with their own mouths. **11** People are drawn to the speech of righteous people. Social turmoil is the result of wicked speech because it stirs up strife. **12** Hateful people focus on the faults of others, and thus they generate discord. But loving people have mercy on others, and thus do not focus on the faults of others (1 Pt 4:8; see 1 Co 13:4; Js 5:20). **13** Wise people will speak those things that benefit society. Punishment is due those who do not speak or behave righteously. **14** Wise people receive teaching because they always want to know more. Foolish people encounter problems in their lives because they reject counsel. **15** Rich men find security in their wealth, but poverty makes life unstable for the poor. **16** Righteous living will be blessed by God. The wicked, however, will reap the consequences of their wickedness. **17** Those who are receptive to instruction from God's word are on their way in life to eternal life. The way of the wicked is error, and eventually will lead to destruction. **18** When one tries to conceal resentment or anger in his communication with others, he is foolish. He is deceptive in his speech because he is concealing feelings in his heart that he needs to correct. **19** If one cannot control his great amount of speaking, he will eventually sin by what he says (Ec 5:1-3; Mt 12:36; Js 1:26; 3:2). He usually speaks about those things concerning which he knows little. **20** Those who speak consistently and without respect of persons, draw others to themselves and what they have to say. **21** Many are drawn to those who speak that which is right (See Ec 12:11; Jr 3:15). **22** When one is blessed spiritually and physically by working according to the will of God, there is no regret over what he leaves to others as an example of living.

10:23-32 The wicked will reap the consequences of their wrong doing. **23** Unrighteous people rejoice in their wicked deeds that they do to others. **24** The one who does wrong fears that he will get caught for his wrongdoing (See Jb 3:25; Is 65:4). **25** The wicked pass away as a storm (See Jb 21:18; Is 17:13), but the influence of the righteous will continue in the lives of those whom they have influenced. **26** Lazy people irritate those who are doing the work. **27** Obedience to the will of God brings long life (Ps 55:23; Ec 7:17), but also eternal life. Wicked people reap a shortened life because they reap the whirlwind of their wicked deeds (Gl 6:7,8). **28** While the righteous look forward to the future (Rm 12:12), the wicked are fearful that they will reap what they have sown (Jb 13:3; Ps 112:10). The thief is fearful of getting caught. **29** When one is obedient to the will of God (His way - Ps 25:12; 119:27; see Jn 14:6), he is confident, not arrogant, that he is in a right relationship with God. If the wicked do not reap what they sow in this life, they will be destroyed in final judgment (2 Th 1:6-9). **30** Obedience brings assurance (Compare 1 Tm 4:8). Disobedience will eventually lead to termination. For the Israelites, disobedience led to their termination in the land of promise (Lv 26:33; Dt 4:27; Is 22:17) **31** The righteous person will speak that which is right and fair (Compare Ps 37:30; Hb 13:15). People with hidden agendas will eventually be found out and rejected (Compare Mt 3:10; Lk 13:7). **32** The righteous know the will of God because they seek His wisdom. But rebellious people are obstinate to the will of God, and thus they do not have the love of God in their hearts.

Chapter 11

11:1-11 The contrast between the righteous and unrighteous manifests the blessings that come from righteousness. **1** God abhors the use of dishonest weights that are used to measure favorably to an unrighteous owner (Lv 19:35,36; Dt 25:13,14; see Ex 30:13; Lv 27:25; 1 Ch 23:29; compare Ez 14:10; Am 8:5; Mc 6:11). **2** Arrogance will lead one to embarrass himself (Lk 14:11; 1 Co 10:12), but others will see our wisdom when we conduct ourselves with humility. **3** People of integrity are guided by good moral principles, but perverse people have no principles. **4** Riches will not deliver one from death. A man will give all that he has in order to deliver himself from harm (Jb 2:4). **5** When one knows that which is right, he will be guided by his principles. Those who have no principles will unfortunately reap the consequences of their wicked beliefs. Their ways will be wicked because they are not according to the will of God. **6** Deliverance from harm is the result of walking according to the will of God. But those who follow after their own selfish lusts will reap what they have sown (Gl 6:7,8). **7** The wicked will work all their lives to acquire that which is of this world. When they die, they leave everything for others to squander. **8** The righteous are delivered from the trouble that will entangle the wicked (Compare Lk 16:25). **9** Those who have no love of their neighbor will slander and deceive for the destruction of their neighbor. Through knowledge, the righteous escape the maliciousness of slanderous people. **10** The righteous use their prosperity for the benefit of the people. Since the wicked have used the people to gain their prosperity, the people shout for joy when the wicked are gone. **11** When righteous people prosper, they use their wealth for the benefit of their community. But the influence of the wicked destroys the community, for they have exploited the community in order to gain their wealth.

11:12-23 People with integrity benefit society, but those who speak lies and slander others destroy community. **12** Unwise people will speak against their neighbors for the sake of gaining advantage. **13** People who gossip lose the confidence of others because they speak to others those things that are told them in confidence (Lv 19:16). One is deemed trustworthy when he does not speak those things that were told him in confidence. If a person gossips about a certain individual, that individual will assume that he is being gossiped about to others by the person who gossips. **14** There is security in the counsel of many. Two heads of counsel are always better than one. **15** The one who needs surety for a loan is usually incompetent with money. Those who offer their guarantee for his loan will

join him in his debt. **16** People admire a woman who conducts herself with integrity. Ruthless men, on the other hand, will not have the respect of others. **17** We are the victim of ourselves if we are harsh and mean to others. **18** We each reap what we sow, which is a principle of life (Hs 10:12; Gl 6:7,8). Do good and you will receive good from others. Do evil and you will reap the same. **19** Through righteous living we will reap the best of life, but if we live contrary to righteous moral principles, we will suffer the evils of life. **20** If one would be a friend of God, he must live according to God's instructions. Otherwise, he is detested in the sight of God. **21** No matter how comfortable the wicked make themselves feel, they will receive the reward of their evil deeds. But the posterity of the righteous will be free from calamity that the wicked leave for their children. **22** A gold ring attached to a pig's snout is like a good looking woman attached to foolish behavior. **23** The righteous can be optimistic about the future, for they have planted seeds that will bring forth the fruit of righteousness. The wicked have only gloom in their future.

11:24-31 There are rewards for righteous behavior, but punishment for wicked deeds. **24** The one who gives freely will be given to, but the one who is stingy will not reap the blessings of others. **25** When one is generous with his blessings, others will be generous to him. Generosity encourages the same in the lives of others. **26** One is hoarding his grain if he has sufficient to sell to others to plant their crops or feed their families. **27** Those who seek to do good to others will reap the good that others return to him. But if one searches for evil, he is sure to find it. **28** When one's focus in life is on his wealth, he is not concerned about the welfare of people. He will fall (10:2; Ps 49:6,7). The wealthy are often the loneliest people in the world. But the righteous will thrive with many friends. **29** Wicked behavior in one member of a family will bring calamity on the entire family. Foolish people bring themselves under the servanthood of the wise. **30** Righteous living will eventually result in eternal life. The fruit of the righteous is an appeal to others to also partake of the tree that gives life. **31** If righteous people reap good for their good deeds, then certainly justice is when the wicked reap evil for their evil deeds.

Chapter 12

12:1-8 One who leads a disciplined life will excel beyond those who do not exercise self-discipline. **1** One proves that he loves knowledge because he seeks it from all sources. But the foolish despise being corrected in the error of their way. **2** Condemnation awaits crafty people, but godly people can look forward with hope. **3** If one builds his life on wicked deeds, his foundation is unstable. On the other hand, the righteous have invested good in the community, and thus they have a solid social foundation. **4** When a wife conducts herself with integrity, she gains the pride of her husband (See 31:10-31). A disrespectful wife is an embarrassment to her husband. **5** When the righteous make plans, they are considerate of others. However, when the wicked make plans, they seek to deceive others. **6** The wicked speak in a way that brings ruin to the lives of others. The righteous put others before themselves, and thus rescue them from danger. A righteous person will speak in a manner that encourages others. **7** The posterity of the wicked comes to an end, but the descendants of the righteous continue (See Mt 7:24). **8** Society will speak well of good men, but they will despise those who deal unrighteously in the community.

12:9-14 Diligence in one's life will reap its benefits, both in prosperity and in acceptance by the community, for society despises a lazy person. **9** It is better to be a humble man with enough money to hire one servant, than to spend one's money in order to put on a face of being somebody, and yet have no money left for food. **10** Because there is kindness in the heart of the righteous, they have compassion for their animals (Compare Ex 20:10; Ps 36:6; 145:9). The nature of the wicked is revealed by their ill treatment of their animals. **11** The diligent person will always have food, but the one who runs after fantasies does not have good judgment. **12** Wicked men would rather steal from others, than work for honest wages. Righteous men work for their food. **13** Evil men are eventually found out, thus trapped by their double talk (Ps 7:15,16; 9:16). Righteous men are consistent in what they say and do. **14** That which a person sows, he will eventually reap. If he sows goodness, he will reap good (Is 3:10,11; Mt 25:35). But if he sows evil, he will reap the same (Gl 6:7,8).

12:15-28 In order to discover those who are wise in society, we must identify the behavior of the foolish. **15** The self-centered and self-opinionated person looks to his own needs and considers his own beliefs to be superior. Wise people seek to learn from others. **16** When insulted, the wise man will maintain self-control. **17** The foolish are discovered by their lies. And if caught in a lie, they lose their integrity, and thus are not trusted by others. **18** Fools use words to hurt others. Wise men use words to heal broken spirits. A wise person always seeks to say something good about other people in order to build them up. **19** Truth will endure forever, but lies endure only until they are discovered. **20** The result of a deceitful heart is behavior that hurts others. **21** The reward determines the character of individuals. Trouble manifests a fool and goodness manifests the righteous. **22** The Lord hates liars. However, He loves those who speak with truth. **23** The wise person is determined by his quiet spirit and use of chosen words. Fools are identified by their endless speaking. **24** Those who are aggressive will lead the people, but no one will follow a lazy person. **25** Depression is the result of worry that is out of control. Anxious people need encouragement, not judgment (See Mt 6:34; 1 Pt 5:7). **26** A wise person will choose his friends well. He will not bring into close companionship those who will lead him contrary to his principles. **27** The hunter who will not cook his own food is lazy and hungry. The diligent person prizes his possessions because they are an indication of his hard work. **28** At the end of the journey of life, there is eternal life for the righteous, but eternal death for the wicked.

Chapter 13

13:1-12 Though righteous living is not a guarantee that one will be blessed, such living does remove many obstacles

that are encountered by the wicked who deal fraudulently with others. **1** Wise people are determined by their willingness to listen to the advice of others. This listening starts in the home when children are trained to listen to their parents (Compare 1 Sm 2:25; 4:17). **2** The outcome of good living is that one enjoys the fruit of righteousness. The wicked, however, must reap the consequences of their evil dealings with others. **3** A wise person will be very cautious about what he says, and how he says it (See 18:21; 21:23; Ps 39:1; Js 1:26). **4** Zealous people will always be productive, and thus satisfied with their labors. However, lazy people will never acquire that which they desire. **5** A righteous person will not listen to lies about others. He will shun the wicked who bring disgrace upon themselves by their slanderous attacks against others. **6** One guards his integrity by doing that which is right, but unrighteous deeds will result in the wicked being shunned by society. **7** Some people pretend to be rich, but actually they have nothing (Compare Lk 12:21,23; 2 Co 8:9). There are others who pretend to be poor, but actually they are rich. **8** The rich have ransomed their lives to acquire their riches. The lazy remain in poverty because they do not work. **9** The influence of the righteous will continue to shine and affect society positively (See Et 8:16; Jb 18:5,6; Ps 27:1). People rejoice when the wicked leave their presence. **10** The arrogant are self-centered, and thus easily engage in arguments with others. The wise, however, do not seek to argue about their beliefs, but desire to hear the opinions of others. **11** If wealth is not earned by hard work, then one does not have respect for it. Inheritances are often spent by children who gave no labor in working for it. **12** When that for which one has hoped is not attained, then one's discouragement may digress into despondency. But when one's dreams are finally realized, one is invigorated to continue with expectation.

13:13-25 The zeal of life is based on dreams and accomplishments. When a person sets and attains goals, he is encouraged to be productive in society. **13** In order to lead, one must learn to follow the instructions of others. Leaders who do not know how to follow the instructions of others are harsh in their leadership of others. **14** The one who takes the advice of a wise person has an advantage over the one who arrogantly rejects instructions. His advantage is based on knowledge of how to perform tasks, whereas the arrogant have cheated themselves of many skills. **15** Good conduct and tact wins the support of others. But when one behaves wickedly with others, he will live a hard life. **16** A wise person takes action according to what he knows. He gathers as much information as possible before he makes a decision. But when a person takes action without consultation, he reveals that he has acted foolishly. **17** The nature of a message depends on the character of the messenger. A disappointing message can be presented in a favorable manner by the one who seeks to encourage the recipient. But a prideful person feels that the information he has for others is an opportunity to exalt himself. **18** If parents do not discipline their children while they are in the home, the children will not discipline themselves when they leave the home. Their lack of a self-disciplined life, therefore, will lead to their ruin. **19** When a zealous person fulfills his goals, he has a sense of self-satisfaction of a job well done. However, fools know no other life than unrighteous behavior. They are fools simply because they enjoy the way of laziness. **20** One's wisdom is determined by the friends he makes. Wise people gather around themselves those from whom they can source knowledge. Fools gather around themselves those over whom they can exercise control. In the end, the friends of the fool will lead him to destruction. Wise people accomplish great things because they surround themselves with people who know how to get things done. **21** Misfortune will be the reward for the foolish decisions that are made by fools. In contrast, those who do good to others will receive the same in return. **22** A good father thinks of the welfare of his children and grandchildren (Compare Ep 6:4; Hb 12:5-11). He thinks about the survival of his posterity. If the unrighteous do not spend all their wealth by consuming it upon themselves, it will be passed on to others. The children of the selfish, therefore, will be given a heritage of poverty. **23** A foolish poor person may have an abundant crop, but in his foolishness and lack of vision for the future, squanders it in living for the moment. **24** Parents discipline their children in order that the children discipline themselves when they leave the home (See 22:15; 23:13; 29:17,18). Undisciplined people become lazy and indifferent. They become corrupt by seeking to take from the labors of others instead of working to provide for their own needs. Thieves were undisciplined children. **25** Those who plan for the future live well off their labors when the future arrives. But those who think only of consuming upon their own lust in the present, will be hungry when the future arrives, for they will have no food.

Chapter 14

14:1-19 Wisdom and foolishness are both identified by behavior. One cannot claim to be wise, and then act foolishly. **1** Wisdom directs one to develop a great family, whereas foolish behavior dishonors the home. Children who have no respect for their family will behave foolishly and selfishly. **2** The one who fears the Lord is obedient to God's commandments. But because the unrighteous love evil ways, they are intimidated by the good behavior of the righteous, and thus they despise the righteous. **3** One's foolish talk can get him into trouble. A disrespectful mouth will lead one to suffering punishment for harsh things that he says. Foolish speech always has consequences. **4** A strong ox will pull the plow that tills the soil. If there is no farming of the land, there will be no food for the home. **5** One who is trustworthy and holds to truth will bear witness to that which is true. One cannot represent the truth if he behaves foolishly. **6** One scoffs because his arrogant motives hinder him from determining that which is right. Because of his rebellious spirit, it is difficult for him to accept advice from others. **7** A wise person will seek the companionship of those who have knowledge. Once a person perceives that someone is foolish, then he should separate from that person lest his acquaintance with the person turn into friendship. Friendship with foolish people is a formula for personal disaster. **8** A wise person will give much thought before he takes action. He will do so lest he acts on the counsel of fool-

ish people (See Ep 5:15). **9** The foolish person will sluff off the error of his way as if it were nothing. He will not consider the serious consequences of his sins. **10** Only the person who is in sorrow can know the extent of his own suffering. Close friends can only perceive a person's sorrow from outside his heart. However, God knows the inner most parts of our hearts. **11** Wicked behavior will produce animosity in one's neighborhood. Such behavior will also generate animosity from within a home. Thus through a spirit of strife, the seeds are sown for the destruction of the family of the wicked. **12** The self-centered nature of man leads him to believe that he can establish his own moral standards. But the standards he establishes will lead him to destruction (Rm 1:28; 1 Tm 4:2). Only God's moral standards will lead one to life. **13** Laughter may cover one's inner pain, but the inner pain will eventually steal away one's joy. A pessimistic spirit will hinder one from discovering true joy. If one focuses on the faults of others, then he has no joy. **14** Those who are faithless will reap the reward of their apostasy. But if one sows good things, he will reap the same from those to whom he did good. **15** Those who are naive will be quick to believe everything that is told them. But the wise person will carefully ponder every word. **16** A wise person will fear God, and thus keep His commandments in order to be instructed in life. But those who are arrogant will trust in themselves. Because they are hotheaded, they will behave themselves into destruction. **17** One who easily loses his temper will often find himself in great trouble with others. He will say and do things that he later regrets. Because he is quick-tempered, he will be shunned by others who are always in fear that they may do something that will cause him to lose his temper. Quick-tempered people have few or no close friends. **18** If one behaves foolishly, he will reap evil consequences. If he reacts impulsively, he will reap isolation from others. **19** Those who do good will eventually be vindicated, and thus the wicked will be found out for who they are.

14:20-35 Riches and poverty are often the result of social behavior, not the circumstances in which one lives. The foolish are more likely to become poor, and those who are wise in the things of the world are likely to become rich. **20** The rich have friends because their friends think they can receive something from them. The poor, however, have true friends, for their friends know that they will receive no financial benefits from rich friends. **21** If one despises his neighbor because he is poor, then he brings shame on himself, and thus sins. But the one who helps his poor neighbor will be blessed with a happy heart (Jn 13:17). **22** Those who plan evil go astray. They go astray from the will of God and from the desire of the community. Thus the one who schemes evil is always alone. **23** When one talks, but does nothing, his much talking will lead to poverty. One can talk, but he must take action in order to bring forth fruit from his planning. **24** Riches are the adornment of those who have wisely worked. But for the fools, only folly yields folly. **25** One who bears truth will deliver those who have fallen victim to the lies of the wicked. One is set free only when he accepts truth. **26** When one fears the Lord, he is obedient to His commandments. If one builds his house on obedience to the Lord, then he will give his children a posterity of faith (Compare Gn 17:7; Ex 34:7; Jr 33:20,21). **27** The secret to a happy life is discovered in obedience to the Lord. Through a knowledge of and obedience to the word of God, one can escape the many snares of evil in life. One can escape the bondage of error. **28** In order for a king to reign over the people, the people must be willing to follow. If a king does not win the hearts of the people, his reign is dictatorial, and thus, tyrannical. He does not reign, but dominates those who are under his bondage. **29** The person who understands the problems that people encounter in life will have mercy in reference to the faults of others. He will not be judgmental as the foolish person who is quick to react to the faults of others (Js 4:16). **30** The one who has a positive mental attitude about life, and is in peace with his neighbor, will not only live longer, but will also enjoy the abundance of life. Angry people have more physical problems with their minds and bodies than those who are happy. **31** The righteous recognize and worship God. Because they are godly, they behave righteously toward all those whom God has created. They are thus benevolent toward the poor, realizing that the poor are also God's creation (Compare Dt 15:11). **32** Calamity will bring down the wicked who live without hope of life after death. But if the righteous succumb to death, they have hope of resurrection. **33** Wisdom is discovered in the heart of the discerning. It is not discovered in the behavior of fools. **34** Those nations that reject the moral principles of God have determined their doom. Only through the exaltation of God's principles in the civil laws of a nation will a nation prosper. The nation will prosper because God's social laws are best for man, for man cannot create social laws that do not in some way conflict with the laws of God. **35** The wise king will recognize good moral behavior in the lives of the people. But he must use the punishment of law in reference to those who are wicked.

Chapter 15

15:1-20 A wise person can be determined by how he speaks and how he behaves. **1** If one answers harshly in the midst of controversy, he will only intensify the discussion, which discussion will lead to an argument. **2** Wise people skillfully speak what they know. But one who knows little will often seek to fake knowledge by speaking much. Those who speak much do not necessarily know much. **3** God is omniscient. Neither the righteous nor the wicked can escape His presence. Being conscious of His presence, therefore, brings comfort to the righteous, but fear to the wicked. **4** A gentle word to one who is in sorrow will calm their spirit. Perverse words, however, will bring one to sorrow. **5** Fools are identified by their rebellion against the instructions of their fathers. A son who does wrong, but receives correction from his parents, is considered wise. **6** By honest living the righteous become rich. But those who have acquired their wealth through wicked means will eventually encounter trouble from those from whom they exploited in order to gain their riches. **7** Wise people will share their knowledge with others, but the foolish see no need to help others by sharing their knowledge. Those who share their knowledge of God, therefore, are wise. Those who do not, are unwise. **8** Though the wicked offer their sac-

rifices according to the law, their sacrifices are rejected because they offer them with an insincere heart (1 Sm 15:22; Is 1:11; Jr 7:22; Am 5:21-24). God's law is established in the life of a person who responds in worship (Rm 3:31). Worship is not inspired by a legal performance of ceremonies, but by one's need for God in his life. **9** Because the wicked seek that which is contrary to the will of God, they are detested by God. God, however, loves those who love to follow after that which is right in response to their worship of him (Rm 12:1,2). **10** Those who have a rebellious personality detest correction. Therefore, because the rebellious do not accept correction, they will reap what they sow (Gl 6:7,8). **11** God knows the realms of Sheol and destruction ("*abaddon*"), and thus He knows the hearts of those who pattern their lives after wickedness (Compare Jb 26:6; Lk 8:31; Rv 9:2). **12** The proud person is conceited, and thus rejects those who would correct him. His pride will keep him from consulting the wise. **13** Happy people manifest their joy to others. But pessimistic people harbor anxiety that breaks their spirit. **14** Wise people are students. Those who are righteous, seek the knowledge of God, and thus are good Bible students (2 Tm 2:15). **15** Those who are continually afflicted become despondent. The despondent will feed off those who determine to be happy in affliction (See Js 1:1,2). One's happy spirit, therefore, is good emotional medicine for other people. **16** It is better to be poor and close to God, than to have the anxiety that comes with riches. **17** It is better to enjoy a poor man's meal, than to have the anxiety that accompanies the rich man's feast. With the rich man's feast comes ulterior motives of the rich, but there are no strings attached to a meal with the poor. **18** A hot-tempered man will generate arguments. But one who is in control of himself will bring peace of mind to others. Peacemakers preserve society. **19,20** Children who do not listen to their parents bring them much grief. Their spirit of rebellion will eventually lead them into many troubles in life. But the way of righteousness is a highway without obstacles (Is 57:15; Jr 18:15).

15:21-33 Having a good mental attitude will bring great joy to one's life. It will also bring comfort to those who are discouraged. **21** The foolish rejoice in doing that which is foolishness. They think that life is centered around silly activities. Such activities may bring happiness for a brief period of time, but the happiness that is brought is temporary. **22** In order to develop plans that will succeed, one must consult as many people as possible. With the counsel of many people, one will have confidence in reference to the outcome of one's plans. **23** An encouraging word that is spoken at the appropriate time will bring great comfort to those who are in distress. **24** The wise will stay on the path that leads to life, and thus they will escape the downward path that leads to death and Sheol. **25** God detests the exploitation of widows. **26** Since the wicked conceive unrighteous things in their hearts, they are despised by the Lord. **27** The wicked business dealings of the unrighteous person will bring trouble to his own house. A righteous official will refuse to accept bribes (Is 5:8; Jr 17:11). **28** A righteous person will put much thought into what he says. On the other hand, fools speak before they think (See 1 Pt 3:15). Their mouth is running before their brain is in gear. **29** Since the Lord cannot be present where there is a rebellious heart, then the wicked are not in God's presence. Since God answers the prayers of the righteous, He does not answer the prayers of the wicked. **30** One should present himself with a smile to all in order to bring joy to the hearts of others. Good news stirs the morale of everyone. The righteous, therefore, have a responsibility to share their joy with others. **31** Those who humble themselves in order to listen to the advice of others will be at home with others who do likewise. **32** The one who does not listen to the advice of others will be the victim of his own stubbornness. **33** The fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of wisdom (1:7), it is the foundation upon which one continues to grow wise. The arrogant are not honored because they reject the instructions of those who seek to turn them from their way of error (See Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11; Js 4:6). The humble are honored because they accept instruction.

Chapter 16

PARALLEL CONCEPTS

16:1-9 God works in the affairs of man in order to bring about His eternal plan. **1** Man can make his plans, but he must keep in mind that God is in control of all things. And thus, one should make his plans according to the will of the Lord (Compare 1 Co 3:9; 2 Co 3:5). **2** A person may seek to determine his way according to his own abilities, but it is God who knows us better than we know ourselves (Ps 19:12). God thus evaluates and knows our motives. **3** If the Lord is the center of one's life, then what one plans should be based on the will of the Lord (See Ps 37:5; 90:17; 1 Pt 5:7). The wise person will know the will of God, and thus plan according to the will of God. **4** God did not make men evil, and thus predestine them to destruction. The wicked have individually chosen their course of life. The righteous receive eternal life as a result of their voluntary obedience to the will of God (Compare Jn 3:17; 1 Tm 2:4). **5** Though all men would join forces to determine a law unto themselves, they are arrogant, and thus cannot stand against the judgment of God that will be based on His law. Regardless of the number of men who may agree on a particular moral standard of living, it is not possible for man to develop moral standards of living that do not eventually lead to their own destruction (Jr 10:23). **6** Only through the atonement of God can sin be forgiven, for it is against God that sin is committed. It is the duty of man to depart from evil by following after the commandments of God. **7** When one obeys the Lord, the Lord will work all things together for good (Rm 8:28; see Jr 39:12). When we go to work for God, God goes to work for us. **8** A person must guard his integrity when dealing with those of the world with whom he must work in order to make a living (See Ps 37:16). He must avoid all fraud (Jr 22:13). **9** The righteous make plans, but they must keep in mind that the Lord is working in their lives (Compare Jr 10:23).

16:10-24 If a country would seek to be at peace from within, then its leadership must manifest an example of moral living. **10** Those who are in positions where they have authority over the lives of others must exercise great wisdom (8:15).

11 Corrupt leaders will lead an example for the population to deal corruptly in their business dealings (11:1). Righteous leadership sets an example of moral good. The leadership of a nation, therefore, must lead by the example of their lives in order that the political and business world conduct themselves accordingly. Merchants must not possess weights that manifest corruptness (Dt 25:13; see Lv 19:35; Mc 6:11). Corrupt business dealings will lead to the downfall of a business. **12** If the leaders of a nation behave themselves immorally, the people will do the same (See Ps 72; Is 11:5). The moral fiber of a country can be destroyed by immoral leaders. **13** Leaders will gain the following of the people if they deal justly and honestly with the people, for honest citizens will follow those who are just and righteous. **14** Wise is the king who has by his side those who will temper his reactions to bad news. Hot-tempered leaders will make wrong decisions. **15** When the spirit of the king is bright, then he is favorable to all who are around him. **16** Those who focus their lives on acquiring wealth will often find themselves in situations where they are using people to acquire their wealth. It is best to focus on people, with one's financial dealings being secondary. **17** It is the purpose of the righteous to live according to the commandments of God, and thus stay clear of the path that leads to destruction (Is 35:8). **18** Pride indicates that a person is self-centered, and thus he will fall over himself as he deals with people (17:19; 18:12; Is 2:11-17; Jr 13:15). **19** It would be better to have a humble spirit among those who are oppressed, than to be arrogant and among those who oppress the poor. **20** Good things will come to those who deal fairly with others. And thus the foundation for gaining happiness is to deal with others according to the will of God. **21** Those who are wise will be discerning with their words. And because they are discerning, others will accept what they say (See 27:9; Ps 19:10). **22** A person will enjoy the abundance of life if he seeks wisdom and understanding (10:11; 13:14). The only instruction that fools can give to others is foolishness. **23** Wise people think before they speak, and thus speak carefully chosen words. **24** As one would seek the honey of a honeycomb, so he should seek kind words that bring peace and comfort (15:26). If one speaks kind words, others will be drawn to him.

16:25-33 When men plan evil, only evil will result. **25** A man can plan according to his own devices without consulting the word of God, but his plans and life will only come to disaster (14:12). **26** Hunger will encourage one to work. Each man is responsible to work for himself in order to provide for his own food (See Gn 3:19; Ec 6:7; 2 Th 3:10). **27** A man's heart is wicked if he seeks the faults of others, and by knowledge of those faults seeks to destroy the reputation of others (See Ps 7:15; Js 3:6). **28** With the knowledge of others' faults, a perverse person seeks to destroy relationships for his own gain (6:14,19; Js 3:6). **29** Those who are evil and who live contrary to law, will seek to lead others down their own path to destruction (Ps 36:4; Is 33:15). **30** Through the body language of the eyes and lips, evil men seek to encourage others to follow in their way. **31** The aged have gained respect if they have lived a righteous life (3:2,16; 4:10; 9:11; 10:27). **32** Hot-tempered people tear down what men of integrity build. If a person has a calm spirit, he is honored above those who are victorious on the battlefield (14:29). **33** The world functions according to the providence of God, for God is working all things according to His plans. In casting lots for decisions in Israel, God directed the outcome in order to preserve Israel. He did so in order that He might carry out His plan for Israel (See Nm 34:13; 1 Sm 14:41,42; Jh 1:7; See At 1:26).

Chapter 17

17:1-12 If we will submit to the will of God, He will mold our character according to His will. He can do this only if we know His will, which is the word of God. Those who do not study their Bibles cannot know the will of God. **1** It is better to enjoy one's meal in peace than to be in the midst of quarreling around a great feast (See 15:17; 1 Sm 1:5,6,13; 2:13). Peace with one's fellow man is more important than a good meal. **2** In a historical setting, Rehoboam was a disgraceful son, while Jeroboam inherited the rule of the northern tribes of Israel, but was not a son of Solomon (1 Kg 11:26 – 12:19). **3** As fire is used to smelt gold and silver, God uses trials to refine the character of man (15:11; 24:12; Ml 3:2,3; 1 Pt 1:7; Rv 3:18; compare Js 1:1,2). **4** There are warnings against those who speak evil and give bad advice. Responsibility must be placed on the one who gives heed to evil pronouncements. **5** If one shows disrespect for the poor, he has forgotten that the poor are also the creation of God (14:31; 24:17,18). **6** Grandchildren are a joy to their grandparents, and parents are the pride of the children. **7** Fools are not gifted with discreet speech. Rulers should speak truth, since falsehoods are not of the nature of their position. Because of their positions, officials should deal truthfully with the people. **8** Bribes are successful in persuading others to make prejudicial decisions (15:27; Dt 16:19; 1 Sm 12:3). Those officials who accept bribes do not have the people at heart. **9** If one keeps bringing up the faults of others from the past, then he is encouraging separation between friends (See Zp 2:3; 1 Co 13:4). **10** Though a fool receives lashes for his error, it is not his nature to learn by his mistakes. After his lashes, the fool will return to his foolish behavior. All a wise person needs for correction is to be informed of his mistakes by friends. **11** An official who has no mercy will be sent to correct those who are bent on rebellion. **12** Though meeting an angry female bear would almost lead to certain death, dealing with the foolishness of a fool will certainly end in tragedy.

17:13-28 If one determines to live righteously, he will suffer from the hands of those who are determined to do evil (2 Tm 3:12). **13** If sin could be categorized, one of the worst sins would be returning evil for those who do good to us (Compare 1 Sm 20:30; Lk 6:11). **14** Arguments have a beginning. The wise person knows when an argument is about to begin, and thus knows how to detour the argument for the sake of peace. **15** Unjust judgments by officials are detested by the Lord because the Lord is just in all His judgments. **16** Fools believe that there is an easy road to wisdom. It was a custom of the day that wisdom could be acquired from teachers when an offering was brought (Compare 1 Sm 9:7,8). But because of the rebellious spirit of fools, it is difficult for them to learn (Com-

pare Lk 24:25,45). No amount of money would bring them wisdom. **17** True love will continue regardless of conflict between two parties. True friends are never separated forever by disagreements. **18** One should not allow himself to be subject to a guarantee (surety) over which he has no control (20:16). **19** Those who love to sin against that which is right, are actually loving that which puts them into conflict with their fellow man. The one who builds an expensive house puts himself into a precarious position of having to support it. **20** People who are filled with deceit believe that everyone else is of the same heart. And thus, they do not see good in others. Also, ungodly living leads to further ungodliness. **21** When a son rebels against the instructions of his parents, he brings shame to his family and heartache to the parents (See 15:20; 23:24). **22** Those who are positive in their outlook on life have better health (3:8; 12:25). **23** When bribes are accepted by officials, justice is perverted (Ex 23:8; Dt 16:19; Is 1:23; Jr 22:17; Ez 13:19; Hs 4:18). **24** Fools lead aimless lives. **25** The unrighteous behavior of children will always bring grief to righteous parents (See vs 21; 10:1; 15:20). **26** If one does harm to those who are living righteously, he has judged himself to be wicked (Compare Jn 18:23). **27** Wise people speak little, and those with understanding speak calmly (Compare 10:19; Js 1:19). The mouth of a fool is out of control. **28** One often manifests a lack of confidence when he speaks too much. And one who speaks too much in a crowd of people is often manifesting uneasiness among people.

Chapter 18

18:1-24 This chapter is again a contrast between the behavior of the wise and the foolish. **1** A person separates himself from others because he is thinking of himself. When approached by society, he is not able to deal with social interaction because of his lack of social skills. **2** Fools are opinionated. They have little interest in the thinking of others (12:23; 13:16; 15:2). **3** Society has contempt for the wicked, and thus their presence is not desired. **4** Those who speak good things bring life and encouragement to others. Good people have an inexhaustible amount of good to say to others. **5** When partiality is shown to the wicked, and justice denied the righteous, then the foundation upon which society rests has collapsed (See Lv 19:15; Dt 1:17). **6** A fool will generate contention, and with his words will invite a beating. **7** Those who cannot control what they say will be the victim of their own speech (Ec 10:12). **8** Gossips destroy the reputation of others. Gossip manifests that one has low self-esteem, for the one who gossips seeks to bring others down in order to exalt himself (16:28). **9** The lazy person, and the one who wastes, are of a similar nature. Both are not responsible for carrying out their responsibilities in society (10:4; 12:11,24; 23:21). **10** As the high tower is the safest place of a city under attack, so is the Lord the safest place to find security in a world that is attacked by sin (Ps 61:3). **11** Because the rich trust in their wealth, they feel that they are secure in society, and thus cannot be brought down to poverty. Because their security is in their wealth, their security in the Lord is weak. **12** Arrogant people present themselves for rejection, while the humble are exalted (15:33; 16:18). **13** If one speaks before he has heard all the facts, he will embarrass himself before others. If one speaks before he hears all the facts concerning what another thinks, then he will speak and make unfair judgments concerning the opinion of others. **14** If one has a strong spirit, it will sustain him while in sickness. But those who are weak in spirit will often succumb to bad circumstances. One must maintain a positive spirit in times of calamity in order that he not allow the environment in which he experiences calamity to control his character. **15** Those who are wise will continue to learn. They are students of life in order to build on their understanding of all things. They are students of the word of God in order that they learn the greatest wisdom of all. **16** If one comes bearing gifts, he will be welcomed as a friend (See Gn 32:20; 1 Sm 10:27; 25:27; 1 Kg 4:21; 10:25; Mt 2:11; Lk 16:9). **17** If only one side of a story is heard, then what is said is often accepted as truth. It is wise to hear both sides of a story, for in hearing both sides of the story the truth can be determined. **18** If two parties are in a disagreement concerning a matter, then both parties can agree to cast lots (flip a coin) in order to settle the matter. **19** Once two people have an argument, it takes a great deal of time to bring them together again. It is difficult to receive them because they often harbor unforgiving spirits that carry on for years. **20** A person must be accountable for what he says, and pay the consequences of wrong statements. Only by taking ownership of the consequences of what one says will he learn to be cautious about speaking before he thinks. **21** Those who realize the power of speech will often use it to their own advantage. Therefore, those who know the power of speech must assume responsibility for what they say (See Js 3). **22** Married people live longer. They do so because God intended that people live in companionship with one another in order to enjoy the fullness of life by sharing with others. **23** Rich people are often harsh. They resent the pleas of the poor. In fact, they often shun the poor because they see them as a threat to their riches. **24** If one would have friends, then he must be friendly. And when one gains a friend, the friend will often be more true to friendship than a blood brother (17:17; 27:10).

Chapter 19

19:1-17 When one is content with where he is, and with what he has, he has a greater understanding of and appreciation for his economic status in life. **1** It is better to be a poor man with integrity than a rich fool (Compare 28:6). **2** It is not good to be without knowledge. However, it is worse to be without the knowledge of God. For without the knowledge of God, one will continually run in the direction of error and destruction. **3** When one rejects the word of God, he will be the victim of himself. We must take responsibility for our own foolish behavior (Compare Ez 18:25,29; 33:17,20). **4** Self-serving people will seek to be the friend of those who have money. But because one cannot expect any gifts from the poor, the friends of the poor are sincere (See 14:20; 18:23,24). **5** The one who perjures himself will not go without punishment (14:5; see Ex 20:16; 23:1; Dt 19:16). **6** Because some are political, they will seek to be a friend of some ruler (29:26;

Jb 11:19). And because some are materialistic, they will seek to be a friend of those from whom they may receive financial blessings. The politically minded often seek power and positions. The financially minded seek relationships that are based on the possibility of financial gain. **7** The brothers of the poor are disappointed because they can receive no financial help. The poor are abandoned by those who seek friendships that are based on finances. **8** Good news to the poor is that they need not wealth in order to be wise and have understanding. Through both wisdom and understanding they will prosper. If they do not prosper financially, they will prosper with great friends and eternal life (16:20). **9** This is a warning against those who would perjure themselves against others (vs 5). Slanderous people will be judged by society when they are discovered and rejected. Slander reveals a jealous and envious heart. **10** There are two social situations that are not normal. First, fools do not work in society to gain wealth (Compare 17:7; 26:1). Second, we do not set rulers over us who are of a lower social class (Compare Ec 10:7). If society did, such would be social anomalies in normal societies. **11** Those who are hot-tempered usually have little discretion (Compare 14:17,29). But those who show discretion are merciful to the faults of others, and thus they do not over react to the faults of others (Mc 7:18,19). **12** Wise servants of the king understand the moods of the king. They are cautious that they do not incite his temper (See Am 3:4,8). **13** Disobedient children will disgrace a family (10:1; 15:20; 27:21). A woman who cannot cease nagging her husband builds an emotional wall between the two (27:15). **14** Children are blessed if they inherit the wealth of their parents. But a loving wife is an inheritance from the Lord. **15** Society is not responsible for those who refuse to work for their own food (10:4; 12:24; 20:13). **16** The one who follows instructions will guard his own life. But if one has little regard for his own well-being, he will reject instructions, especially those instructions that are given by God (13:13; 16:17). **17** Those who are kind to the poor will have their rewards (Is 10:1,2; Am 2:6,7; 4:1-5; compare Mt 25:40).

19:18-29 Through the gift of listening one is able to increase his knowledge. **18** If parents do not discipline their children while they are young, when they are older it is too late to teach them how to discipline themselves (See Dt 21:18; Ep 6:4; Cl 3:21). **19** One who acts before he thinks, must pay the price for his hot temper. If he does not take ownership of his wrong reactions, he will not learn to control his temper. **20** The more one listens to others, the more knowledge he will gain (8:10; 12:15; see Jb 8:7). **21** A man may have plans to do great things, but he must first consider if his plans are according to the will of God (16:1,9; Nm 23:19; Ml 3:6). **22** The intention to do good is what gives real value to an action. One may say he will do something, but does not perform according to his desires. A man of integrity will not promise he can do something, and then fail to do it. Successful people are identified by the fact that their performance matches their desires. **23** When one fears the Lord, he is obedient to the will of the Lord, and thus he has life (10:2,3; 14:27). The disobedient person will receive trouble for his rebellion (See Lv 26:6; Dt 9:15). **24** If a person is too lazy to feed himself, then others are not obligated to do it for him (26:15). If a person does not work, then he has no right to eat the food of others. **25** When punishment is rendered to fools, they learn by the example of the discipline that is rendered to them. Wise men learn simply by being instructed (13:1; 15:12; 21:11; compare 1 Tm 5:20). **26** A rebellious child will bring shame upon a family name (10:5; 13:5; 17:2). **27** If one does not continually give heed to instruction, he will become self-centered, and thus stray from the path of wisdom. If one listens to that which is true, but does not follow the way of truth, then he will stray (See 1 Tm 6:20). **28** Ungodly people devour wickedness, for it is the food of their life. Their character is defined by their mockery of that which is right (See 14:5; 16:27). **29** Society will discipline those who behave in a manner that is contrary to law and the security of people.

Chapter 20

20:1-14 One's behavior determines if he is a righteous person. **1** In this text, strong drink is personified. Illustrated as a person, intoxicating drinks overcome the undisciplined, and then lead people to uncontrolled behavior (See Lv 10:9; Nm 6:3; Is 28:7; Jr 35; Ep 5:18). **2** One is wise if he does not behave rebelliously before those who are in power (19:12). **3** Men of integrity will control their behavior in a manner so that they do not lose control. **4** Lazy people look for any excuse not to work. Because they do not work, the workers are not obligated to feed them. As a result, the lazy person finds himself in poverty. **5** People of understanding will question the wise in order to draw on their wealth of wisdom. **6** There are those who boast of all the works they have done. There are those who are busy doing the work (Mt 6:2). **7** Fathers who behave themselves with integrity will leave an example for their children to do likewise. One of the best things fathers can leave their children is a heritage of integrity. **8** A wise judge with experience will perceive what is right, and thus deliver the righteous from the unrighteous (Is 11:3,4; 1 Co 2:15; see Ps 11:4; Hk 1:13; Mt 3:12). **9** No man can say that he is without sin (1 Kg 8:46; Jr 7:9; Rm 3:9,10,23; 1 Jn 1:8). **10** Merchants who use unequal weights in their scales to measure goods to customers are detested by God (vs 23; see 11:1; 16:11). Fraudulent business dealings are detestable to God because such are the work of evil men who exploit others for their own gain. **11** If we can determine the character of a child, then certainly people can determine the true character of an adult who pretends to be righteous, but inwardly is wicked. **12** Though man's senses are limited, the omniscience of God is of all things that exist (See Ps 94:9). There is nothing that man can do that is not known by God. **13** Lazy people who love to sleep will not be working for their food. Industrious people will be their bosses, and thus if they do not work, lazy people will not eat (6:6-9; 23:21). **14** The customer bargains with the seller until he has brought down the price. He then goes away feeling good that he received a good deal.

20:15-30 Wisdom is not a guarantee that one will be wealthy, but a wealthy person must be wise. **15** Having a controlled mouth is more valuable than gold and precious

gems (See 3:13-17; 8:10,11). **16** It is unwise to be surety for someone about whom you know little (11:15; 17:18; 22:26). If one is so unwise that he gives his clothing as surety in payment for a harlot, and thus sleep with a wayward woman, then he should lose his clothing (See Ex 22:26; Dt 24:6,12). One should never be surety for someone who has brought himself into debt because of his own foolish business practices. Surety should be reserved only for those who have fallen on hard times. **17** If a person acquires his food by fraud, the food may satisfy his immediate hunger, but in reality it is like eating gravel (5:4; 9:17). **18** Before one puts into operation a plan, he should seek as much advice as possible from others. One should certainly seek the advice of as many people as possible before engaging an enemy in battle (Compare Lk 14:31). **19** A gossip has few friends because those people who are near him feel that he is gossiping about them when he is in the presence of others. Once people discover that a person repeats of others what is said to him in confidence, they will shun the one who gossips (11:13). **20** Under the law the penalty for cursing a parent was severe (See Ex 21:17; Lv 20:9). It was severe because the punishment was a guarantee that such a child should not be one to continue disrespectful behavior to the next generation of society. **21** The impatient son who hastily wants his inheritance is focusing on the wealth, and thus seeks to consume it on his own lusts. He will take his inheritance, but end up in the pig pen (See comments Lk 15:11-32). **22** Vengeance belongs to the Lord (24:29; see Mt 7:12; Rm 12:14,17; 1 Pt 3:9). If one harbors vengeance in his heart, it will turn to bitterness. One forgives his offender for his own sake, not for the sake of the offender. **23** The principle is that God detests those who work fraudulently in their business practices (See vs 10; 11:1). **24** The believer must understand that God is working in the course of all things, and in his own life (16:1,2,9). Though we do not understand His working, we must trust that He is working all things together for good (Rm 8:28). **25** One should not eat the sacrifice of the vow before he makes the vow. When a vow is made, it is a law that one imposes on himself, and thus it is binding as a law. **26** A wise king will intimidate the wicked of his kingdom by rendering harsh judgment on those who are caught. **27** God is omniscient, and thus knows all that is in the heart of man. There is nothing hidden from His searching. **28** When kings rule through mercy and truth, they gain the favor of the people. Mercy is extended to those who are repentant. Truth and justice are rendered to the rebellious. **29** Young men must realize that they will pass from strength to a grey head, and thus must not put too much confidence in their strength (16:31). **30** Physical punishment will change the moral behavior of those who are repentant of their sins (19:29; Ps 119:67).

Chapter 21

21:1-31 God not only works in the affairs of man, He also controls the affairs of the world in order to accomplish His purpose for the existence of the world. The wicked, therefore, must not assume that they work outside the providential work of God in the affairs of this world. **1** A farmer directs the water in order to irrigate his crops. In the same manner, God can direct the heart of the king in order to bring about His work. **2** Men believe that they can direct their own paths. However, it is God who is directing the course of this world in order that His eternal plan of redemption be accomplished (See 16:1,2,25; compare 14:12; 20:24). **3** Sacrifice is according to law. However, doing right with one's fellow man and being just toward others are more important than keeping law, for if one does right and is just, he will keep the law. But one can keep ordinances of the law without doing right to his neighbor and being a just person (See 15:8; compare Mc 6:6-8; Mt 12:7). **4** Arrogance and pride will lead one into sin, for such manifests the character of one who thinks of himself to be better than others (6:17; 30:3). **5** If one correctly plans for a work, he will succeed. However, if he seeks to get rich quick, he may lose everything, and thus bring himself into poverty (12:11; 13:11; 20:21; 24:23). **6** Using fraud to gain wealth is injurious to the one who commits the fraud. He is often led to believe that he can live by fraudulent means. However, in the end, his treasures will lead to death (10:2; 13:17; 14:27; Jr 17:11; 1 Tm 6:9). **7** Thieves will break through and steal the treasures that the fraudulent have acquired by dishonest means. **8** Righteous people conduct themselves according to that which is right (vs 1; 20:11). Those who are guilty of sin are wicked because they have behaved themselves in a deceitful manner in their relationships with others. **9** It is better to dwell in peace in isolation than in the company of a woman who is out of control (vs 19; 19:13,14). **10** It is the nature of the wicked to eagerly run after sinful actions that affect his neighbor (4:16; 10:23; compare Is 26:10). **11** The simple profit by being disciplined, and the wise learn to do better through instruction (19:25). **12** Wise men see the overthrow of the house of the wicked, and thus perceive that wicked men reap what they sow (Gl 6:7,8; see Pv 22:12; Jb 12:19). **13** If a person does not have mercy and give to the needs of the poor, then when he is in trouble, others will not consider his needs (Compare Mt 18:23-35; 25:31-46; Lk 6:38; 16:19-31; Js 2:13). **14** There is no justification for giving a bribe, for wherever a bribe is given, justice is perverted (17:8,23; 18:6). **15** The righteous always rejoice when justice is done, but justice always brings displeasure to those who are unjust (See 10:23,29; 15:21). **16** It is possible for wise men to go wrong. When they do, they wander into the camp of those who are morally dead, and thus destined to eternal death (27:8; Ps 119:176). But if they resort to true wisdom, they will flee from that which brings destruction. **17** Those who like to consume their wealth upon themselves will develop a life-style that will bring them to poverty (See Am 4:1-3; 6:3-6). **18** When calamity comes, the righteous are delivered and the wicked pay the price for their unrighteousness. The evil of which the righteous are spared is brought upon the head of the wicked (11:8; see comments Et 7; Lk 16:25). **19** Men will not dwell long in the presence of a woman who is quarrelsome and nagging (19:13,14). **20** A wise person knows how to save his resources in preparation for the future. A foolish person squanders his savings, and thus brings himself into destitution. **21** When people do that which is right, they are able to live among others. They will experience the abundant life (See 3:3,16; Mt 6:33). **22** Strong cities provide protection

against an enemy. However, wisdom provides security in life against those who fraudulently seek to deceive the innocent (20:18; see 2 Co 10:4; 1 Jn 5:4). **23** Those who are slow to reply to the harsh words of another will avoid a quarrel (12:13; 13:3; 18:21). **24** Some people behave with overbearing arrogance in their relationships with others. Their arrogance identifies their character and their opinions of others. **25** When a person makes a decision to be lazy, society is not responsible for the outcome of his laziness. His laziness will bring him to poverty. **26** The lazy person dreams of great things, but is too lazy to accomplish his dreams. The righteous give willingly. **27** If one does not keep the law with his heart, then his offering according to the law is detestable to God (15:8,9). **28** A person who gives witness to that which is true, will speak through the testimony of his life (19:5,9). When liars are discovered, they are shunned by society because they have lost their credibility. **29** Wicked people present a bold face to others in order to be in command over others (7:13; see Jr 5:3; Ez 3:7). By living righteously, the righteous secure their way of life (2 Ch 27:6). Others do good to them because they do good to others (Mt 7:12). **30** There is no scheme that can be devised by man that will change the eternal plan of God for the existence of the world (Compare Jb 5:13; Ps 33:10,11; Is 29:14; At 2:23; 4:27,28; 1 Co 1:20; 3:19). **31** Though men may make all preparations to win the battle against the enemies of Israel, it is God who empowered the Israelites to gain their victories. He brought them victory in order to accomplish His plan for Israel (Dt 17:16; Ps 20:7; 33:16; compare Ja 17:16-18; Jg 4:3; 1 Co 15:57).

Chapter 22

22:1-16 If one loses his reputation, it will be difficult for him to find it. **1** Since one's reputation is more valuable than gold or silver, then we should do all that is possible to keep it respectable (Jb 30:8; Ec 7:1; Lk 10:20; At 6:3). **2** There is no justification for the rich to exalt themselves over those who are economically challenged, for God is the creator of both (14:31; 29:13; Jb 34:19). **3** A wise person will perceive if there is danger ahead. But the person who is aloof will proceed without caution. The person who learns through the experience of life will gain great knowledge. **4** One can enjoy the abundance that life offers only by submission to the will of God (3:5-8,16; 21:21; Lk 14:11). **5** Deceitful people are such because they seek to work around or through other people. And because they pattern their lives in such a manner, others will constantly find them out and correct them (See 15:19). **6** Parents are to train their children in moral behavior. If children wander in the wilderness of unrighteousness when they leave home, they will eventually, in their old age, come to understand the wisdom of righteous living they were taught by their own parents. There are no guarantees in training a child that he will not depart from the instruction he is given. If parents have fulfilled their responsibility to implant a moral guide by which their children can find their way back to righteousness after they leave the home, then they have fulfilled their responsibilities as parents. **7** The rich rule simply because they control the economic structure of society. The debtor is the servant of the conditions that were made for him when he borrowed money (20:16; compare Mt 18:25,34). **8** The threat the wicked use to intimidate or control others will eventually fail. When it fails, the wicked will reap the reward of their wickedness (9:18; 12:13,14; Gl 6:7,8; compare Is 1:28; 16:4). **9** Those who have compassion on the poor will be blessed for their mercy (19:17; Dt 15:8-10; 2 Co 9:7,8). **10** People do not like to have friends that continually engage in arguments. For peace of mind, they disconnect with such people (1:22; see Mt 18:17; compare Gn 21; Gl 4:30). **11** When we see the good in others, and our speech is appealing, then we will have friends, even to the friendship of kings (See Mt 5:8). **12** God is on the side of the believer to protect him from those who would transgress against him (See 8:6; 21:12; compare Dt 6:24; Ja 24:17). **13** Lazy people look for every possible reason not to work (26:13). **14** The adulterous woman is strange to the married man, and thus is a snare to his covenant with his wife (See 2:16-19; 5:7-14; 7:6-23). Wise men perceive the flirting gestures of an adulterous woman, and thus stay clear of her. **15** Babies are not born with innate morality. As they grow up, and come to the age of accountability, they must be taught and disciplined to behave according to moral principles (13:24; 19:18; 23:13; 29:15). **16** In the economic society of Israel, the poor could glean for their own grain. The one who did not allow gleaning from his fields was oppressing the poor.

Collection Of Wise Concepts (22:17 – 24:34)

Outline: (1) Introduction to the collection of proverbs (22:17-21), (2) Admonitions for society (22:22 – 23:14), (3) Admonitions for good parenting (23:15 – 24:22), (4) Admonitions for social relationships (24:23-34)

INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTION OF PROVERBS

22:17-21 It is the responsibility of youth to submit to the teachings of those who have assumed the responsibility to instruct society in the moral principles of God. **17-19** If one does not submit to the teaching of the wise, he has manifested his rebellion, and secured the doom of his future (Compare Hb 3:7,13). Wise students will listen to their teachers. One must thus store up words of wisdom in order to have a library of good things to say for every occasion. The word of wisdom that one must store up in his memory is the word of God. The result of our storing in our minds a knowledge of God is that our lives are changed. **20,21** One learns the words of truth in order to impart them to others when the occasion may call for truth.

ADMONITIONS FOR SOCIETY

22:22-29 Words of truth that come from God empower the social and economic situation of the poor within society. **22** It is a detestable thing in the eyes of God to take advantage of the poor (See 19:4). If the rich exploit the poor in order to build their wealth, they have manifested their unrighteousness. **23** God will take the side of the poor if they are exploited (23:11). He will take their side to the point of launching his attack against the rich. **24,25** If a person makes friends with hot-

tempered people, he will become the same, and thus reap the consequences of rash behavior (1:10-19; 15:18). **26,27** Do not be quick to make a loan to another, lest someone rob you of your money by not paying back the loan. If the one who has asked for a loan has not fallen on hard times that was no fault of his own, then he probably has little sense about the use of money. If you make the loan, you will become the victim of his lack of knowledge concerning finances. **28** Landmarks established the borders of one's inheritance of Israel (Dt 19:14; Hs 5:10). If the landmark was moved, then one was stealing the property of another (Compare 15:25; 23:10,11; Jb 24:2). **29** Industrious people gain the respect of other people. If one knows how to work, he will have no problem in providing for himself and his family. He will be asked by the rulers to work for the people (Compare 1 Sm 16:21,22; 1 Kg 10:8).

Chapter 23

23:1-14 Social skills are learned by the wise in order to function in society, and thus gain the favor of others. **1,2** When one is in the presence of princes and kings, he must exercise proper etiquette. One will embarrass himself if he eat as a glutton in the presence of the king. Thus one must exercise self-restraint when eating. **3** One must remember that the king must be political when inviting guests, and thus one must not eat the king's food without considering the motives of the king. **4,5** Riches can be elusive as an eagle to a hunter. If a person's goal in life is to work to be rich, then his motive will often be the acquisition of the riches, and not the people from whom he gains the riches (Compare Jn 6:27; 1 Tm 6:7-10). **6-8** If one is the guest of a miser, then he is a guest of one who has evil motives (Compare Dt 15:9; Mt 20:15). One will be disgusted with his meal, for the miser is using the meal to gain something from the guest. He will serve one according to the evil motives of his heart. **9** Fools will not accept the advice of the wise. Sometimes what one says to fools will be used against one (9:7-10). A religious legalist is always looking for an accusation against those who oppose him. **10,11** One should not encroach on the fields of orphans by moving their boundary markers. If one does, then God will defend the orphans and work against one (22:22,23; see Lv 25:25; Nm 5:8; Rt 4:1-8). **12** If a person would be knowledgeable, then he must apply himself. It takes hard study to learn (1:2). The knowledge of God has come to us by the inspiration of godly men. But we must learn it by the perspiration of hard study. **13,14** Undisciplined children will not discipline themselves when they leave the home. An undisciplined citizen will suffer under the law of the land (13:24; 19:18; see Dt 21:18-21).

ADMONITIONS FOR GOOD PARENTING

23:15-28 God's word provides guidelines, or skills, for living within a society. Since these guidelines are from God, they will guarantee a happy life if obeyed. **15,16** Those who conduct themselves according to the wise principles of God will make both their parents happy (22:15). **17** Though what the wicked may have or do seems appealing to one's pride, one should not follow after the example of their behavior (3:31; 24:1,19; Ps 37:1; 73:3). **18** One must always keep in mind that the outcome of the godly life will be the abundant life (5:4; 19:20; 24:14; compare Jb 12:12; Ps 37:9). **19-21** If one cannot control his intake of wine, nor his eating of food, he has revealed a flaw in his character. He has no self-control. His lack of discipline in his life will lead him to poverty (13:15; 20:1; 23:29-35; 24:33; compare Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34). **22** Listen to your father and love your aged mother. Respect of parents is a sign of wisdom. **23** One should make every effort to invest in the truth, for by it one will keep his life from deception (4:5,7; 16:16). **24,25** As a parent rejoices in the good things that his children do, he will be saddened when disappointed by the unrighteous behavior of his children (10:1; 17:21). **26-28** An adulterous woman will lead a young man to his own disgrace, embarrassment of his family, and under the law of Moses, to his own stoning (See 2:16; 22:14,19).

23:29-35 Drunkenness is a disgrace. It manifests a flaw in the character of a person, which flaw is the lack of discipline (20:1). The drunk lives an immoral life. He is insensible and irresponsible. The picture here is of one who has no control over his consumption of alcohol (See Is 5:11). And if this picture of drunkenness is the result of consuming the naturally fermented wine at the time of the writing of the proverb, one can understand the curse that comes with the highly distilled wines and whiskeys of today.

Chapter 24

24:1-22 Good advice that can be given to a young person who leaves the home and goes out into the world is not to associate with evil people. **1,2** Stay away from those who desire to live contrary to the law and in rebellion to the word of God (vs 29; 3:32; 23:17; Ps 37:1,8). Evil people scheme to do evil, and thus they will take the righteous into wickedness with them. **3,4** The home of a righteous man is built with wisdom, understanding and knowledge (9:1; 14:1; 23:18). It is a strong home because of the relationships that are maintained among family members. **5** A wise person is strong because he knows how to avert disaster. The abundance of his life increases as he grows in knowledge and implements good moral principles in his behavior (Am 2:14; see Pv 21:22). **6** Before one engages in conflict with another, through wisdom he will access as much knowledge as possible of the situation and his enemy (20:18; 11:14; compare 15:22). **7** The elders resided at the gates of the cities in order to make judgments for the people (1:20-23; 8:3; 22:2). This was not the place for fools. **8** A troublemaker is one who schemes to do that which is wrong. **9** He who would deliberately sin, is foolish. Such a person is known as an evil schemer. **10** One must remain strong in times of adversity. If he falters, then it is revealed that he is not a strong person. **11,12** Those who are compassionate will seek to rescue those who have engaged themselves in things that lead to calamity. But if one does nothing to help another prevent calamity, then God will hold him accountable for doing nothing when he could have helped prevent his fellow man from calamity (See 12:14; 24:29; Dt 22:1-4). **13,14** One should desire wisdom as he would desire the sweetness of honey. Wisdom is the foundation upon which one's future is guaranteed (23:18). **15,16** The wicked

are warned not to scheme against the righteous. The righteous person will fall because of hard times, or misfortune, but he will always get up and move on. However, when the wicked person falls, he is crushed (Ps 34:19; Mc 7:8). **17,18** A person should not rejoice in the calamity of any person. If he does, he is seeking revenge. But vengeance belongs to God. God may lift up the unfortunate over whom one rejoices in order to rebuke the person who has rejoiced over the misfortune of another (17:5; compare Lv 19:18; Ps 58:10,11; Rm 11:18-21). **19,20** One should not be discouraged by the accomplishments of the wicked (Ps 37:1), for God will eventually bring down judgment on them (13:9; 23:18). One should simply do good, and not allow an evil environment to influence his attitude. **21,22** One should not rebel against the government (See Ec 8:2; 10:20; see comments Rm 13:1-7; 1 Pt 2:17). Government has been established among men in order to prevent anarchy. If a person aligns himself with rebellion, he will face the wrath of the king, and eventually the judgment of God.

ADMONITIONS FOR SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

24:23-29 It is with wisdom that citizens conduct themselves in a manner by which they can cohabit with others in society. **23** If for any reason one shows partiality in making judgments between parties, then the judgment is unjust (18:5; 28:21; Lv 19:15; Dt 1:17; 16:19). **24** People will detest those officials who make judgments that allow wicked people to continue in society (17:15). **25** Those who take a stand against the unjust official will have done that which is right. God's blessings will come upon such a person (2:10). **26** An honest and fair judgment is like a kiss to the lips. **27** A person should take care of his house after he has prepared for his food that will sustain his life. Providing for one's family takes priority over taking care of others. **28** One should not generate unnecessary disputes with neighbors. If there is a dispute between neighbors, then truth should be spoken (14:5). **29** Even if one is wrong, retaliation is not justified (See comments Mt 5:38-48).

24:30-34 There is no excuse for laziness. **30,31** One's laziness is always manifested to others. Laziness cannot be concealed. The lazy person is the one who has no understanding. **32** If a person perceives the results of a lazy person, then he should learn that such behavior has a negative impact on one's life (8:10). **33,34** As a thief unexpectedly comes upon his victim, so poverty will seize the possessions of the lazy (See 6:6-11).

Solomon's Proverbs
Copied By Hezekiah's Scribes
(25:1 – 29:27)

Outline: (1) The first collection (25:1 – 27:27), (2) The second collection (28:1 – 29:27)

There is a collection of 137 proverbs of Solomon from 25:1 to 29:27. As a king who sought to reform Israel, Hezekiah brought these proverbs together in order to restore social behavior and honor of God within Israelite society (See 2 Kg 18:18,37; Is 29:13).

Chapter 25
THE FIRST COLLECTION

25:1-10 The fame of Solomon in Israelite history added to the acceptance of his teaching. This first section of teachings deals with righteous kings and those who surround him in his court. **1** Solomon's proverbs were copied from various sources where they had been preserved since his reign. The scribes may have had the original autographs, but we today do not. We trust in the accuracy by which these scribes carried out their duty to bring the word of God to us. We thus have the word of God today in written form as God wanted us to have it. **2** Some things God has not revealed (Dt 29:29; see Ec 8:17; Is 14:15). However, it is the business of the king to know his people. His knowledge of the affairs of the people gives him the opportunity to make correct judgments. Rulers who distance themselves from their people have no right to rule. **3** What the king knows is not always understood by the masses of the people (Compare Jb 11:8). **4,5** Vessels were made only from pure silver. Strong kingdoms are built upon men of integrity, men who have submitted to the will of God, and thus are pure in heart (See 16:12; 29:14; Is 1:25; Jr 6:29). **6,7** One must not be presumptuous in reference to associating with those in political authority. It is better to be asked into the presence of the king because of one's integrity, than to assume that one should be among authorities (See 2 Sm 14:24; Lk 14:7-11). **8-10** Before one argues his case, he should have all his facts concerning what he is to argue (17:14; Mt 5:25). If he does not, then he will face embarrassment when those before whom the case is argued find out that he does not know what he is saying. And, it is better to argue one's case in private with the person with whom he has a dispute, than to do such in public.

25:11-14 There is great power in communication, and thus one must be sure his words are wisely chosen in order to communicate that which is truth. **11** When one speaks a good word at the right time, what he says will be appreciated (vss 18,19,26,28). Communication is not based on the amount of words one might say, but the timing of what one says. **12** If one is receptive to words of wisdom, the words that are communicated by others will be greatly appreciated. **13** A drink of cool water refreshes those who are working in the heat of the harvest. So is a trusted message that is conveyed through a messenger who is trusted by the recipients of the message (See 13:17; 22:21). **14** One who thinks he can do something that he cannot, will be embarrassed when he fails. He is as a promising cloud during drought that does not deliver rain.

25:15-28 By our conduct, others can identify that to which we are loyal, whether to God our creator, or to the wicked ways of men in this world. **15** The power of speech is revealed through gentleness and persistence (15:1; 16:14,29,32; see comments 1 Pt 3:15,16). **16** Moderation is the spice of life. If one consumes sumptuously upon his own lusts, he will pay the price for his overindulgence (vs 27). **17** Do not overstay your visit. And if you are residing in a friend's house for a long period of time, do not take advantage of his hospitality. One is responsible for providing for his own lodging. One risks losing a friend if he overstays his visit. **18** The lies of a

false witness are like weapons of war. They bring destruction to the reputation of those against whom one slanders. **19** If one trusts in untrustworthy people when one is in need, then they will only complicate one's problems. Do not rely on their lack of reliability (See Jb 8:13-15). **20** A lighthearted response to a grave situation does not bring comfort to those who are involved in a calamity (See Dn 6:18; Rm 12:15). **21,22** Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who despise you (Mt 5:44; Rm 12:20). In this way, one must love his enemies by expressions of good (Compare 1 Sm 24:17-19; 26:21). "Coals of fire" were given in order that one might start his fire and cook his own food. If one shows clemency toward others, even to one's enemies, God will give a reward. **23** As the northern wind in the northern hemisphere brought the cold winter rains, so speaking behind one's back brings the chill of an angry person. **24** Wives who cannot control their mouths will push their husbands away, for men are not drawn to women who cannot control their speech (21:9). **25** When one is in doubt concerning what is transpiring in other places, good news always brings comfort (vs 13). **26** When a righteous person morally falls, it brings great disappointment to all those who looked to him for inspiration. **27** If one seeks to be glorified, he has lost his honor. He destroys that for which he seeks. People will vomit up those who seek their own glory (vs 16). **28** If one has no self-discipline, then he is vulnerable to the attack of temptation (See 16:32). His lack of self-control is his weakness, and thus the means by which he will fall.

Chapter 26

26:1-12 Fools are defined by their refusal to behave according to moral and ethical norms in society. This section is a series of sarcasms that define those who live foolishly. **1** There is no integrity with a foolish person. He has no reputation for being honorable. He is socially out of place as snow in the summer, and destructible as rain during harvest time. **2** There is no justification for speaking evil against another, especially one who is seeking to be righteous before God. When one does speak evil, the words that are spoken never go away when spoken against a righteous person, for the wicked are usually looking for something to say against the righteous (Compare 1 Sm 17:43; Ne 13:2). The evil that is spoken against a righteous person will often come back on the one who spoke the words. **3** As animals must be controlled, so those who are foolish must be controlled by society (10:13; 12:20). **4,5** These verses do not contradict one another. The warning is that one not stoop to the moral level of a fool (vs 4). Silly questions need not be answered (Compare Mt 21:23; 22:21,22; Lk 13:23). One must rebuke the one who is behaving foolishly (vs 5). **6** Fools will either twist or misquote a proverb, and thus a message on their lips will be twisted (13:17). **7** Discernment is not characteristic with fools, therefore, it is not possible for them to correctly interpret a proverb. **8** A stone that is bound in a sling will not accomplish its purpose. A fool who is given responsibility will disappoint those who have entrusted him with duties to be performed. **9** As a drunkard cannot use a thorn bush to accomplish a task, so a fool cannot understand a proverb or use its wisdom properly (vs 7). **10** Both foolish and wicked people will reap what they sow. The foolish will reap the consequences of unwise speech. The wicked will reap the consequences of unrighteous deeds (Gl 6:7,8). **11** Fools cannot learn from their mistakes. They cannot discern that which is detestable (See 2 Pt 2:22). **12** The conceited person is worse than the fool because he sees all things through his own self-interest (3:7; 29:20; Lk 18:11; Rm 1:22; 12:16; Rv 3:17). And for this reason, he is not subject to correction by others and repentance toward God (See Mt 9:12; Lk 15:7; 18:14).

26:13-16 No righteous person can be lazy. **13** The lazy person will seek any excuse to justify his laziness (22:13; see 6:6-11; 19:24). **14** A lazy person has a love affair with his bed (See 24:33). If one cannot get out of bed in the morning and get to work, he is lazy. **15** There is no extent to which a lazy spirit will take a man in being a sluggard. **16** The lazy have an indefinite number of reasons why they cannot do work.

26:17-28 The righteous need wisdom in order to determine those in society who are not trustworthy. It takes wisdom to live a peaceful life. **17** One should mind his own business, and thus not involve himself in the quarrels of others. One should not look for trouble. There is enough trouble looking for us. **18,19** Deception is no joke. One cannot escape paying the price for deception if he is caught. **20** Gossips generate strife. A talebearer is one who spreads malicious gossip. He is the slanderous person whose mouth must be stopped. **21** When a contentious man is identified, he must not be allowed to have a forum where he can spread his strife (21:9; 27:15; see comments Rm 16:17,18). **22** Evil speech will inflict wounds on the hearts of people (18:8). **23,24** One may give the pretense of being a good person, but his evil heart will eventually be made known by what comes out of his mouth (See Mt 23:27). **25** If one flatters the lips, be careful. Sometimes the one who speaks the most has the most to hide (See Mt 12:45; Js 1:19). **26** People use speech to hide a wicked heart. This is deceit, and will eventually be known to everyone (5:14; compare 1 Jn 3:15; 4:20). **27** If one sets a trap for his neighbor, he will eventually fall into it. If he places a stone to cause his neighbor to stumble, he will fall over it himself (Ps 7:15,16; 9:16; Ec 10:8). If one slanders another person, then he will eventually reap the judgment of his own slander. **28** People lie about others because of their hate for those against whom they lie. The result of slanderous speech is the ruin of the one who so speaks, and the ruin of the reputation against whom the lies have been spoken. Jealousy and envy are revealed in the heart of the one who speaks slanderously about another. Dominance over others is often the motive of leaders who slander others (See comments 3 Jn 9,10).

Chapter 27

27:1-22 God made man, and thus social structures for man are best determined by God. These proverbs reveal God's instructions for those who would live in peace with one another in any society. **1** Because there is no guarantee that tomorrow may come, one should fully appreciate each day of his life (1:7; Lk 12:16-21; Js 4:13-16; see comments Mt 6:34). **2** One should live a godly life that manifests praise of God, and

not give praise to himself (Compare Mt 5:16; Jn 8:54; 2 Co 10:18). **3** Fools will always condemn those whom they envy. They believe that by bringing others down through criticism and slander they can lift themselves up. What they do not realize is that the more they slander or criticize others, the lower they take themselves. **4** Envy will lead one to pour out the bitterness or jealousy of his heart on other people. Those who are the victims of envy have a great burden to bear. **5,6** True love for a friend is manifested when one must correct a friend for behaving contrary to moral principles (Ep 4:15). It is better to be corrected by a friend than wounded by the criticism of one who is your enemy. **7** One can benefit from the rebuke of a friend. Though it is difficult to receive correction from a beloved friend, the correction that is given and received in love is sweet. **8** When one journeys from his home, whether for good or bad reasons, he has left the security of familiar things. He has placed himself at the mercy of strangers. **9** The senses are soothed by perfumes and ointments. Such should be the result of counsel from a loving person. Loving counsel should reassure one of a friend's love. One's speech, therefore, should always be seasoned with salt in order that it be received by others (Cl 4:16). **10** One should not forsake trusted friends who have been around for many years. In a time of calamity, these friends will come to one's aid (See 17:17). If one has left his house and traveled to distant lands (vs 8), then he will have left the security of faithful friends. **11** The success of the student is the pride of the teacher (10:1; Ps 119:42; compare 1 Th 2:19,20; 3:8). **12** Wise people perceive that certain circumstances will lead to calamity, and thus they will avoid going down paths that lead to destruction (22:3). **13** If one gives his garment for surety in order to involve himself with a prostitute, then the one who accepted the garment as surety should keep it (See 6:1-5; 20:16). **14** If one behaves toward another in a manner that is provocative and obnoxious, then the reason for his friendship must be questioned. **15,16** Nagging wives distance their husbands from themselves (19:13). Trying to restrain a nagging woman is like trying to restrain the wind by grasping after it. It slips from one's hands as oil. **17** Good friends complement one another by correcting one another when each stumbles (1:10-19; 13:20; 22:24,25). **18** Though one is the laborer for a master, he still has a right to the fruit of the harvest (2 Tm 2:6). **19** As clear and pure water reflects the image of a man, so also will a friend who is pure and moral reflect what one is because he has chosen such a person as a friend. Good men choose good men for friends. **20** Death and destruction will always claim those who are bent on sin, and there are many who will not turn from sin (30:16; Is 5:14; Hk 2:5). **21** The humble character of a man is tested when others give him praise. How he accepts the praise will determine if he is either humble or proud. **22** Fools are fools because of their character. Though corrected, they will not change their behavior. No amount of discipline will turn them from their foolishness.

27:23-27 The life and work of a shepherd teaches many valuable lessons concerning life skills and human relationships. Israel was a rural culture of farmers and herdsmen. From this culture, many practical lessons in social relationships can be learned. **23** A good shepherd will know the state of the sheep over which he cares (See Is 28:23-29; 1 Pt 5:1-4). **24** Wealth does not last, and thus one must focus on that which will exist beyond the end of this world (See 23:5; Jb 20:28; Ps 49:10). **25-27** One's care for his flocks determines the amount of diligence with which he shepherds. Since his livelihood depends on maintaining the flock, then to guarantee his livelihood, he will care for the sheep (See 30:31).

Chapter 28
THE SECOND COLLECTION

28:1-28 A contrast between the behavior of the righteous and wicked helps us to refrain from creating moral laws and social ethics after our own desires. Sometimes cultures exalt that which is evil. What the book of Proverbs teaches is that all social ethics and morals must be determined by the instructions of God. If societies reject the instructions of God, then they will create their own standards of moral behavior, and subsequently lead themselves into moral decay and destruction. **1** If one has a good conscience, and knows that he is behaving according to the will of God, then he will be courageous (Nm 32:23; Ps 23:6; 91; see 1 Sm 17). **2** When there is anarchy and rebellion, there are many who want to rule the nation (Hs 8:4). But social and political stability come when the people submit to the accepted ruler of the nation (Compare 21:22; Ec 9:15). **3** A ruler who has no consideration for the citizens of his country, will be a tyrant who will dictate for his own selfish survival (Is 5; Mc 2:2; compare Rm 1:18-32). **4** Lawbreakers exalt wickedness in order that they may continue in their wicked ways. The righteous, however, are such because of their submission to law. This submission to righteousness puts them in a situation where they have to contend with wicked men (See 1 Kg 19:14; Ps 119:136,139; 139:21). **5** Those who base their morals and ethics on the principles of God are the stability of any nation (Ps 119:100; Ec 8:5; Jn 7:17; 1 Co 2:15). **6** It is better to be a poor and righteous man than a rich and wicked man (19:1). **7** A righteous and obedient son causes a father to be proud, but a disobedient and wicked son brings shame on his family (10:1; 23:19-25; 29:3; Ep 6:1-4; Ti 1:6). **8** A greedy person will increase his wealth by charging unfair interest (6:1-5; see Lv 25:36,37; Ps 15:5; 109:11). However, his wealth will eventually come into the hands of someone who will have compassion on the poor. **9** God will detest the prayers of those who are disobedient to His law (15:8; Lk 18:10-14; Jn 9:31; see Ps 109:7). **10** If one who knows the law of God leads others away from God, then he stands condemned. He stands condemned because he knows what is right, but does not lead people to God (Mt 5:19; 18:6; 23:15). Those who do such will reap the consequences of their bad example (26:27). **11** Those whose vision is not clouded by wealth have a better understanding of life. They better understand those who think they are something when they are nothing (18:11). Those who are successful in business because of their arrogant attitudes and dishonest business practices, therefore, are not good shepherds for the flock of God. **12** When wicked men say everything is fine, then we are in trouble (Compare 11:10; 29:2). Only when the righteous

rejoice must we be assured that things are going well. When righteous leaders lead nations, the people have an occasion for rejoicing. **13** People often do not confess their sins because they feel that others will reject them. However, merciful people are made known when confession is made. We are received by merciful people when we confess. Those who wear a mask over their sins seek to exalt themselves above others, and thus stay at a distance from those who humbly confess their sins (See Ja 7:19; Jb 31:33; Ps 32:1-4; Hs 9:7; 1 Jn 1:6-9; compare Mt 3:6). **14** Those who harden themselves against God will always have a bad conscience about their lives. Fear of the Lord, however, is a guard against falling into sin and destruction. **15** When rulers have no consideration for the people, especially for the poor and those who are socially distant from the rulers, then they govern as tyrants and dictators (See Jr 4:7; Ez 19:6). **16** Tyrannical rulers rule for their own gain. They oppress the people because they use the people to maintain their own power and wealth (10:9; see Jr 22:13-19). **17** The one who is tormented with the guilt of manslaughter, must be a fugitive in a refuge city until the time of his death (See comments Nm 35:31-34). **18** The man who deals wisely and uprightly in his business dealings with others, will not fall victim to those with whom he deals (10:9). **19** A diligent farmer will have food on his table, but lazy people will come to poverty (12:11). **20** If one's goal in life is to be rich, then along the way to his riches, he will often deal dishonestly with others (13:11; 20:21; 21:5). There are many rich people who have not dealt honestly with others in order to gain their wealth. **21** A judge must make decisions without accepting bribes (18:5; 24:23). If he accepts bribes, his judgments will be unfair and corrupt. **22** Those who seek to get rich quick often run over their fellow citizens (See 23:6). They will certainly ignore the poor since the poor offer them no opportunity to gain wealth. Because the wicked rich deal with society in a selfish manner, eventually they may come to poverty (Compare 11:25; 23:4,5). **23** If one lovingly corrects another, he will be respected by the one he corrects. One's correction of another in love is a sign of love and concern for others. **24** A child who seeks to gain control of and squander the possessions of his parents is a criminal before God (19:26; compare Mk 7:11,12; 1 Tm 5:4,8). **25** One who has an arrogant attitude will engender arguments with others. He will do so because he feels that his opinions are better than others (16:18; 29:22; Mt 6:19-34). Only by humbling oneself to God can one consider others greater than himself (11:25; 16:20). **26** If one trusts in the Lord, and seeks counsel from Him, then he will be delivered from himself (vs 14; 14:16; compare Gn 6:5; 8:21; 1 Co 10:12). **27** It is a blessing to oneself if he gives to others (11:24-29; 19:17; Jn 13:17). One cannot hide himself from the needs of others. **28** The wicked often intimidate the righteous into obscurity. But when the wicked are not present, the righteous shine forth (vs 12; 9:10; 29:2,16).

Chapter 29

29:1-27 Social skills make it possible for one to maintain relationships with others in society. They also guarantee the rule of the king. Thus the leaders of a nation must set an example of righteous conduct that is followed by the people. **1** If one refuses to be corrected by hardening his heart against those who correct him, his heart will become so hardened that he will not repent (1:24-33; 6:15; 15:10; Jb 34:20; Ps 2:9; Jr 19:11; compare Dt 10:16; Jr 2:20; 27:8). **2** Unrighteous rulers are a curse to a nation. They bring down the nation because of their own self-interest (11:10,11; 28:12). **3** A disgraceful son will spend his money on harlots (10:1; 28:7). His foolishness is revealed by his living after the flesh. **4** When the government of a nation is controlled by bribes, the nation has determined for itself a destiny of moral doom (15:27; compare 16:12; 25:5; 1 Kg 15:19). **5** The reason for flattery is to gain the favor of another person for one's own self-interest. Therefore, when one resorts to flattery, he should be held in suspicion (vs 5; 26:28; 28:10,23; see Jb 18:8,9). **6** The unrighteous are caught in the snare of their own sin, but the righteous rejoice because their godly living keeps them free from the snare of sin (11:13; 24:16; see Mt 5:12). **7** Righteous people are concerned for the plight of the poor (Jb 29:12-17; Ps 82:3,4). But the wicked exploit the poor for their own gains. **8** Because scoffing men are morally bankrupt, they generate social chaos within a city. It takes wise men to counter the chaos that they have caused (12:10; 15:1,18; see Is 28:14). **9** Do not be involved in an argument with a fool. The fact that he is a fool will be revealed by the wise statements that are presented by the wise (Compare Mt 11:16-19). **10** Murderers detest the righteous because they realize that the righteous do not have to live with guilt. But the righteous are concerned for the welfare of the blameless (Compare Gn 26:14; Dt 2:25). **11** Wise people speak few words. They listen in order to gain wisdom, and then speak at the appropriate time (14:17,29; 16:32; 25:28). **12** It is the responsibility of those in power to set an example. If they listen to lies, then their governance will be corrupted and unfair. **13** What the poor and oppressor have in common that is that both have the opportunity for the instruction of God (22:2; compare Mt 5:44,45). **14** The throne of a just king will be firmly established (16:12; 20:28; 25:5). **15** Undisciplined children will grow up to be undisciplined people, and thus live lives that bring shame upon a family (10:1,13; 13:24; 23:13; compare 17:21; 28:7). **16** Undisciplined children grow up to be wicked people in society. Those who have been brought up righteously, and with discipline, will see the shame that wicked children bring on their parents (Compare Ps 100:7). **17** When children are corrected in the home, and before they leave to join the citizenship of the world, their training in the home will benefit society. **18** When leaders focus the people on godly goals, the people will discipline themselves to accomplish those goals. But leaders who cannot plan for the future, because they have no vision for the future, will lead the people into destruction (Compare 1 Sm 3; 2 Ch 15:3; 28:19; Hs 4:6). **19** It takes more than words to correct a servant. He may understand what is said, but his nature will lead him not to perform according to instructions (vs 15; 23:13,14; 26:3). **20** There is more hope for a fool than for the man who speaks before he thinks (26:12). **21** If a servant is treated as a son, he will eventually think that he has the rights of a son. He will thus be brought to grief because he cannot have the privileges or inheritance of a

son. **22** An angry and hot-tempered person causes dissension in society. His hot temper will cause him to sin (15:18; 22:24; 28:25; Js 1:20). **23** The proud will eventually be humbled, but the humble person will be exalted because people are not intimidated by his presence (15:33; 16:18; 25:6,7; Lk 14:22; compare Pv 11:16; Is 57:15; Js 1:9-11). **24** Those who would be companions to thieves, have made an alliance with destruction. Thieves will make their oaths to one another in order to secure their group from discovery (See Lv 5:1; compare Jg 17:2). **25** One must fear God more than he fears any man. If we fear God we will obey His commandments. If we fear man more, we will fall into the rebellious behavior of man (See Mt 10:28; Mk 8:38; compare Is 51:12,13). **26** One may seek the favor of the judge to receive a lighter sentence, but he must keep in mind that the Lord is the final judge of all men (1 Sm 16:7; Is 49:4; 1 Co 4:5). Therefore, one must seek the favor of God (See 1 Kg 10:24; Ps 45:12). **27** The righteous do not like the wicked because of their ways. The wicked do not like the righteous because they are intimidated by their godly life (See Ps 139:21,22; compare 1 Kg 21:20; Is 53:3; Mt 18:34; Jn 15:19).

Wisdom For Practical Living
(30:1 – 31:31)

Outline: (1) Wisdom from Agur (30:1-33), (2) Wisdom from Lemuel (31:1-9), (3) Wisdom for women (31:10-31)

Chapter 30
WISDOM FROM AGUR

We have no information concerning Agur. Some have suggested that he was a wise teacher of his day, and thus his proverbs were considered to be a part of those statements of wisdom from God that should be added to the collection of proverbs for the posterity of humanity.

30:1-9 Agur's personal observations were in reference to the knowledge of God. His prayer for humility was that he might maintain his integrity. **1** The names, Ithiel and Ucal, may have been used by Agur to communicate the fact that "God was with him" (Ithiel) and that he was "consumed" (Ucal) with the will and word of God. **2,3** Agur confessed his inability to comprehend the incomprehensible God. God is beyond the full understanding of man, and thus man must consult the revelation of God, His word, in order to come to some understanding of God. Those who want to discover the one true God can never do so if they do not study His word. **4** Agur's five rhetorical questions reveal the difference between the magnificence of God and the finite inabilities of man. The questions challenge those who think they can understand all that God is. We can know of God, but we cannot fully comprehend His existence. We would have to be God in order to fully comprehend God (8:24-29; Jb 11:7,8; 38–41; Ps 104:1-5; Is 40:12). **5** God expects us to go to His word in order to comprehend His majesty. **6** If we imagine a false god that is not according to the identity of the God that has come to us through revelation, then we have added to God's description of Himself. The God of heaven can protect us only if we submit to Him, and not to the imagination of our minds (See Dt 4:2; 12:32; Ps 18:30; 84:11; 115:9-11). **7-9** Agur prayed that he not fall victim to falsehoods and lies. He asked that he be given only that which would sustain life. He had seen the curse of wealth, and the despair of poverty. In order to live a life of contentment without the worry of riches, or the desperation of poverty, Agur's prayer was for a life that was without the frustrations of either riches or poverty.

30:10-17 Agur saw problems that prevailed in life. **10** We live in a world where some men seek to advance themselves through the slander of others (Rm 14:4). **11** There are curses that continually affect society. There are those who show disrespect for their father and mother by the wickedness they practice. **12** There are those who are self-righteous and self-centered, and thus do not love their neighbors. **13** There are those in society who are contemptuous. They show no respect for others, especially for authorities. **14** There are those in society who use their mouths to attack others and oppress the poor. **15,16** A leech sucks the blood of its victim until it is full. Such are many in society who view others as an opportunity to advance themselves. They exploit the poor for the sake of gaining wealth. They cannot be satisfied. There are four insatiable things in the world: the grave, barren women, the dry earth and fire. The grave continually receives the dead. There are too many barren women. The earth never receives enough rain to produce bountiful crops. Fire will continually consume all that can be burned. **17** Disrespectful children will not be buried (Ex 20:12; 23:33). Ravens and eagles will consume their flesh.

30:18,19 One may claim to know much, but there is always more to know in reference to the physical world in which we live. Even through the advancement of science in the modern world today, man is not able to understand all that God created.

30:20-23 It is difficult to understand that an adulteress woman feels completely comfortable in her sin. She has completely justified her sin in her own eyes. What would also bring chaos to society would be servants who were made kings, fortunes given into the hands of fools, hateful women who are married, and young maidens to take the place of their mistresses.

30:24-28 Agur was not impressed with fame, fortune and the accomplishments of those who considered themselves to be important people in society. He considered the greatness of little creatures as the ant, rock badger (coney), locust and spider. Though small and insignificant, such creatures of God's creation were able to survive and accomplish great things in comparison to their size.

30:29-31 God has empowered His great creatures with magnificent abilities. The lion has no fear. He has given great speed to the greyhound (the exact identity of the creature mentioned here is not known). The male goat has the ability to traverse great cliffs. A king is strong when surrounded by his army.

30:32,33 The gift to learn starts with humility and the control of one's mouth. Arrogance will hinder our growth in the wisdom of God. It is the goal of the wise to bring peace to society (Rm 12:18).

Chapter 31

WISDOM FROM LEMUEL

31:1-7 ***King Lemuel:*** He and his mother were possibly not Israelites since his name is not mentioned among the kings of Israel. These statements of wisdom come to us through him, though they were taught to him by his mother. This wisdom was given to Lemuel in order that he might carry out his duties in service to the people. ***Women:*** Solomon should have listened to the mother of Lemuel. The king could have any woman, for all women would like to be married to the king. Solomon took advantage of this, and thus his fall was that his many wives led to his fall from total commitment to God. ***Not for kings to drink wine:*** Kings should stay away from wine, lest their judgment be impaired. They may become drunk, and thus forget to behave according to the law. ***Heavy hearts:*** Strong drink was used to purify water (See 1 Tm 5:23). It was also given to criminals in order that they forget their misery.

31:8,9 Those who rule should guard the rights of the oppressed and poor. They should speak up for those who cannot defend themselves. Officials must extend social justice to the underprivileged (See Is 10:1,2; Am 2:6,7; 4:1; 5:15). One has lost his right to be an official for the people if he exploits the people to sustain his position.

WISDOM FOR WOMEN

31:10-31 The conduct of the virtuous woman in the following verses is in contrast to the contentious woman (19:13; 21:9; 25:24; 27:15) and the adulterous woman (vs 2; 22:14; 23:27; 29:3). Throughout the book, the writer has explained the work of the mother in reference to her work to train her children (1:8,9; 10:1; 17:25; 18:22; 19:14; 23:25; 28:24), and now the focus is on this woman in her daily activity. ***Far above rubies:*** A woman of virtue is priceless. ***Husband ... trusts in her:*** She has gained the respect of her husband. ***No lack of gain:*** She is devoted to her husband's well-being. Do him good: She is devoted to her husband, and thus does not work against him. ***She seeks ... works:*** She is not lazy, but industrious. ***Brings her food:*** She makes sure that her family is fed. She is a keeper of the household, making sure that the servants are also fed. ***She considers a field:*** She buys and plants a garden in order to make sure that her family is fed. ***Girds her loins:*** She fastens up her clothing and goes to work with her hands. ***Her merchandise is good:*** She is a good businesswoman, and thus makes sure that she has a profit from the things that she sells. ***Her candle:*** She works into the night in caring for her family and making sure food is ready for the next day. ***Spindle:*** She not only makes clothes for her family, she makes the thread in order to make the clothes. ***Hand to the poor:*** Though concerned first for her family, she cares for others. ***Not afraid of the snow:*** She works through the winter in order to make sure that her family has clothing for the winter. ***Clothed with scarlet:*** Not only is her household clothed, they are clothed with articles of luxury. ***Coverings of tapestry:*** Her clothing is appropriate and in good taste. ***Gates:*** Her husband is respected as a leader, for he sits with the elders at the place of judgment of the city. ***She ... sells:*** She is a wise businesswoman. ***Strength and honor are her clothing:*** Her focus is on her integrity, and thus through her moral character she looks to the future. ***Mouth with wisdom:*** She has educated herself in the law of God, and thus has God's wisdom and word to impart to others. ***Kindness:*** Her speech is gentle. ***Looks well to the ways of her household:*** Her focus in life is her family. She diligently labors because of her great concern for her husband and children. ***Call her blessed:*** Her example of industry and kindness have impressed her children to love her. ***Praises her:*** Her husband is proud of her and always offers words of encouragement. ***Surpass them all:*** Women of the world do great things, but the woman of God does greater things because of her spiritual motivation to work according to the will of God. ***Fears the Lord:*** She is a prized woman because of her godliness, which godliness is passed on as a heritage for her children. ***Her own works praise her:*** The elders in the gates of the city give her praise because of who she is. The virtuous woman is the model of a righteous posterity that has been passed down to her from her own parents. She is thus the preservation of society, and one who is to be followed in order that society be preserved for another generation. For this reason, the book of Proverbs comes to us today.

Ecclesiastes

WRITER

The message of Ecclesiastes was from the "Teacher." The word "Teacher" comes from a Hebrew word (*koheleth*) which has the root meaning "to assemble." Some translations have used the word "preacher" to translate this word, but "teacher" is the better translation. A teacher was one who called others before him in order that he deliver information to them.

King Solomon is the one who is commonly given credit for writing this inspired book, as well as the Song of Solomon. However, some Bible students question this because 1:12 uses a past tense verb in reference to the writer who was a king in Jerusalem. *"I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem."* Since Solomon never ceased being a king over Israel until he died, some have assumed that he could not have written the book. However, the use of the past tense in 1:12 should be regarded as a retrospective statement. The text could be translated, *"I have been king over Israel ...."* The writer was king over Jerusalem to the time these words were penned.

In 1:16 the Teacher refers to himself as acquiring more wisdom than all those who were before him (See also 2:7). It is affirmed by some that it would have been unlikely for Solomon to say this in reference to his fa-

ther David or Saul who were the only two Israelite kings before him. However, in 1:16 the Teacher states that his reign was in Jerusalem. Saul did not reign in Jerusalem. And since the Teacher used the plural pronoun "them" in reference to the kings who reigned before him, then the reference could not refer to Israelite kings, for only one Israelite king, David, reigned in Jerusalem before Solomon. The reference was undoubtedly to the Jebusite kings who reigned in Jebus (Jerusalem) before it was conquered by David.

In Jewish records of genealogy, the phrase "son of David" was used to refer to any descendant of David. The fact that the Teacher of 1:1 is noted to be the "son of David" could mean that he was someone of latter descent who was a king, and then deposed from the throne. However, we would have no reason to think that anyone other than David would be the immediate father of the writer. Since the text does not indicate that the writer was a distant descendant of David, we must conclude that he was an immediate descendant, that is, Solomon.

Some have suggested that the strongest argument against Solomon being the writer is the fact that there are many Aramaic words used in the text that were not in Hebrew literature during the time of Solomon. The conclusion, therefore, was that the book was written sometime after the Babylonian captivity when Aramaic was commonly spoken among the Jews. But recent archaeological studies have identified some Aramaic words that were used in a dialect of Hebrew that was spoken in the northern regions of Palestine as far back as the reign of Solomon. Solomon's worldwide trade would have also brought him into contact with many Aramaic words, which words he would have used in writing both Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. We would assume that Solomon would use Aramaic words in order to reach as many people as possible with the content of the books of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon.

The fact that the writer described himself to have searched and set in order many proverbs, identifies the writer as Solomon (12:9). The mention of a variety of flora and fauna is also similar to the investigations into the natural world that Solomon made (1 Kg 4:33). In the Song of Solomon there is mention of exotic spices, vegetation, much gold, alabaster and jewels. This would have certainly been the world in which Solomon lived. It would not have been descriptive of the world of Israel after the Babylonian captivity when Jerusalem was the home of a poverty-stricken group of Jews who had previously returned from captivity.

There is no conclusive evidence that Solomon was the writer of either Ecclesiastes or the Song of Solomon. However, neither is there any strong proof against his authorship of the two books. Some have assumed that some writer took the part of a literary impersonation of Solomon in order to inscribe the words of Solomon for the writer's immediate generation, which generation lived during the 5th century B.C. But the conclusion to the preceding arguments indicates that Solomon was the writer of the two books. This is the only logical conclusion that we conclude from the contents.

DATE

If Solomon were the writer, then the book would have been written sometime during the latter part of his reign, which 40-year reign ended in 931 B.C. If someone other than Solomon wrote the book, according to some Bible students, then it would have been written much later, possibly as late as 200 B.C. If one rejects the Solomonic authorship, then there is no conclusive date that can be established for the writing of the document.

BOOK

The translators of the Septuagint translated the Hebrew word *koheleth* with the Greek word *ekklesiastes*. This is the word from which the book has been named in our Bibles. The root word *ekklesia* was used in the New Testament to refer to an assembly, and specifically to the assembly of God's people on earth.

The nature of the book is that it is an evaluation of all things that pertain to life. The summation of all that the Teacher viewed was that the purpose of life was to fear God and keep His commandments. With this focus in one's life, the Teacher concluded that the pursuit of what the world offers is only vanity.

This is a book that deals with the common problems that face those who acquire great wealth and are very accomplished in the things of the world. It is a book that is directed to those who are in power and have great wealth. It is the book for the materialist who has left God out of his life. The conclusion of the Teacher was that happiness cannot be obtained through wealth or great accomplishments. If God is not a part of one's life, then there is no lasting purpose for life. Since happiness is the goal of all men in life, then all men must have God in their lives in order to be happy. Happiness is not dependent on either wealth or status in life. God, therefore, must be the centrality of each man's life. If this is not the case in a person's life, then all that is of this world is considered vanity (meaningless) when one faces death.

The theme of the book, therefore, would be the meaningless nature of life if God is left out of one's life. This theme is proved by the personal experience of the writer. The things and ambitions of this world make sense only when one recognizes the One from whom all things have come.

Wealth and accomplishment do bring one to a certain level of happiness. The Teacher would not deny this. However, the happiness about which the Teacher focuses our minds is far beyond this world (Compare Ph 4:7). It is happiness with contentment. It is happiness

combined with peace of mind in death. If one is satisfied with the happiness that the world provides through riches, then he will not understand the happiness about which the Teacher writes. Earthly-minded people will not understand this happiness until it is too late.

It seems that Solomon sought for happiness in everything this world could provide (1:3). In search of a meaningful life, he went to science (1:4-11), philosophy (1:12-18), pleasure and drinking (2:1-3), building projects and wealth (2:4-8), entertainment and sexual gratification (2:8), status in life (2:9-11), a philosophy of fatalism (2:12 – 3:15), consumption of the world's goods (3:16-22), and morality (7:1-18). But without God, all was meaningless. He concluded, therefore, that the purpose of life was to fear God and be obedient to His commandments (12:13).

The Bible student must keep in mind that the Teacher used his personal life as a testimony to the vanity of the things of this world. He had lived his own story. He thus placed himself in the literary position of living the meaningless life in order to bring the readers to the conclusion of 12:13, that we fear God and keep His commandments. This is a book of personal testimony. It is a warning for young people to begin their lives with God, and never leave Him, for in staying close to God one's life will be full.

The Search For Meaning
(1:1 – 2:26)

Outline: (1) Prologue (1:1-11), (2) Vanity of all things (1:12 – 2:26)

Chapter 1
PROLOGUE

1:1-7 ***Teacher:*** This is from the Hebrew word *koheleth* that comes from *kahal*, referring to one who assembles people for teaching. The writer thus introduced himself as a teacher to those whom he wanted to direct the message of this book. ***All is vanity:*** This would be the theme of the book. Life without God is meaningless. The Hebrew word from which "vanity" is translated is *hebhel*, meaning "vapor" or "breath." All that constitutes life, therefore, is as a vapor or breath if it is either consumed or enjoyed without God. All that is of this world will pass away. The mood of the book is thus introduced with the frustration of the writer who has sought the things of the world by placing God in second place. The nature of the book, therefore, is pessimistic, if not fatalistic in some parts. But the reader must understand that the writer places himself in this pessimistic mood in order to convey to the readers the truth of his theme. He writes as one who is living the meaningless life, not as one who had lived it, and then wrote about it, though it is certain that Solomon would have written the book in the last years of his life and reign. ***What profit:*** All is vanity to the one who labors and acquires riches and fame solely for the purpose of seeking pleasure in life. If one's life is simply for pleasure and fame, then he eventually comes to the point in his life where he concludes that all is meaningless. When the materialist comes to the end of his life, he realizes that all was meaningless because he has no hope beyond the grave. ***Generation passes away:*** The world continues beyond the life of every man. Great grandchildren fail to remember the names of their great grandparents. Life is but a breath that soon passes, and we are forgotten by succeeding generations. If life is not lived with immortality in view, then one views life as not worth living, for life is truly meaningless if there is no eternal life. We must study Ecclesiastes, therefore, with the understanding that those to whom the writer addressed the book had little understanding of life after death. The writer is obsessed with death in the book because it is near this event in one's life that he finally realizes that life was vanity without God. ***The sun also rises ... goes down:*** If one does not live for eternal things, then life is monotonous. The natural world carries on with the passing of every generation. Life goes on no matter how much one may enjoy the fame and riches that he might acquire in life. When we die, all that for which we worked in our lives is disbursed to others.

1:8-11 Life continues in a cycle. Great things continue to happen in the physical world, but nothing changes in the life of ordinary men who live with the monotony of life. The frustrations of man's sense perceptions of the continuous activity of the physical leads one to conclude that the activity of the physical world will bring no peace of mind. Though one is blessed with seeing and hearing the wonders of the physical world, the writer concludes that the repetition of the natural wonders of the world do not bring emotional or spiritual satisfaction. At the end of the day, the environmentalist is left frustrated because he realizes that the world will continue after he is claimed by death. ***No new thing:*** Life is only a passing vapor during which one encounters that which has been experienced by thousands before him. There are no inventions, only discoveries of that which God created to be possible. That which is "new" is new only to the next generation who is yet to experience the wonders of God's creation. Advances may be made in science and technology, but the basic human spirit remains unchanged throughout time. ***No remembrance:*** The writer argued in verse 9 that life is vain because there is nothing new. In verse 11 he argues that it is vain because nothing is remembered. Because things are usually forgotten, men build monuments or write books in order not to be forgotten. They establish legacies by which they might be remembered, for such is the reason this very book was written. The Teacher did not want us to forget the legacy of his life, that it was vanity without putting God first. But we must remember that though man may forget, God does not (Ps 56:8). He chooses to remember all His saints and all the good that they do throughout their lives (See 2 Co 5:10). The difference between the materialist and the believer is that

the believer stores up good works that are remembered by his Creator, while the materialist builds monuments of his good works solely from that which was created. The works of the believer, therefore, are not in vain (1 Co 15:58). *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'so that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow them'"* (Rv 14:13).

VANITY OF ALL THINGS

1:12-18 ***I ... was king over Israel:*** The verb tense of this statement seems to exclude Solomon from being the author of the book, since Solomon reigned continuously over Israel until his death. The book could have been written by another king of Israel at a later date. Though the life-style of Solomon may be a natural setting for the content of the book, we must not assume that the other kings of Israel did not also live a similar life of vanity. However, because of the nature and content of this book, as well as a similar writing style of the Song of Solomon, we would translate the verb in a retrospective manner, that is, that the Teacher identifies himself as having been the king of Israel to the time of the writing of this document. Solomon, therefore, is the best candidate for being the author. ***To seek and search:*** This was characteristic of the inquisitive mind of Solomon (1 Kg 4:33). If one's acquisition of wisdom and knowledge of things of this world is the primary goal of life, then he will be left with frustration. In this case, the Teacher, as a king, used all his wealth to make his search successful. Though he diligently searched that which is of the world in order to find satisfaction and happiness, he could not. If a king could not discover that life was more than the vanity of its possessions, then certainly the common man would surely fail. If the king could not discover enough, then certainly we cannot learn more. With all our science and technology today, we still cannot discover all that is to be discovered. All scientists, therefore, end their lives in frustration because they could not learn all that they wanted to learn. ***Crooked cannot be made straight:*** The more one searches, the more one discovers that we live in an imperfect world. We always die with unfinished business. With God's gift of creative imaginations, we seek to accomplish all that we can. We want to learn everything. But at the end of life we are left in frustration concerning those things we could not complete, or those things we did not have enough time to learn. ***Madness and folly:*** The Teacher sought to know wisdom from contrasting perspectives. The thought here may be that he sought to live in the realm of both madness and foolishness in order to understand the wisdom of life. But such led to his own frustration. Living in the realm of madness and folly will certainly provide the opportunity to learn from the school of hard knocks, but one will graduate from the school with a great deal of emotional wounds, if not physical disabilities. One will learn that a life of personal drug abuse is meaningless when he is left with a debilitated mind. ***Knowledge increases sorrow:*** The more one knows, the more he realizes that he does not know. He is sorrowed because he often becomes arrogant in his knowledge, but humbled in knowing that one person can never know everything. The urge that drives a person to know, also frustrates him because he can never know enough. Nevertheless, knowledge is to be chosen over ignorance, for in ignorance a person becomes the victim of his own lack of knowledge.

Chapter 2

2:1-8 ***Pleasure ... wine:*** Many people have tried to party throughout their lives in order to be happy. Drunken parties only lead to misery the day after. Drug abuse only encourages the addict to continue in a life wherein he is in the bondage of a chemical of this world. Entertainment and drugs are only occasional diversions from the real issues one has that cause unhappiness. ***With wisdom:*** Some feel that they can succeed in finding happiness if they control a hedonistic life through wise choices. But to excite one's thinking with alcohol and drugs only diverts one from the real problems that hinder happiness. True wisdom leads one away from those diversions that we use to acquire momentary happiness or emotional bliss. ***Works:*** Another diversion from the problems of life is to involve oneself in obsessive work that takes one's mind off pressing problems. In the case of Solomon, great efforts were made to accumulate great wealth by receiving treasures from passing dignitaries who came to honor the king (See 1 Kg 10:1,2,10). The king involved himself in every sort of entertainment with his crowd of the rich and famous in order to stimulate joy. He thus engaged in every facet of life that might generate within him peace of mind and happiness. He abused his body with drink. He abused his time with much work. He abused his idle time with parties. But in the end, all these things came to an end, and there was no real happiness. All was vanity and the wasting of one's time with the futility of things of this world.

2:9-11 Because of his wealth and status as a king, he had the privilege of venturing into everything that life had to offer in order to find that which all men want, that is, to be happy. Though he had all that money could buy, and enjoyed the status of being a king, he still concluded that all was vanity. If wealth and power could have brought happiness, then certainly Solomon would have been the happiest person in the world at the time. Wealth will certainly bring a level of joy and happiness, but we must keep in mind the context of the Teacher's theme. True happiness is acquired only when one mentally transcends the things of this world. This comes only when one's mind is set on those things that are above, not on the things of this world (See comments Cl 3:1,2). ***Vexation:*** His efforts to acquire that which he so desired led him to be a frustrated person. And frustrated people are unhappy. The problem with seeking happiness through self-centered activities is that no person can be truly happy by focusing on oneself. True and permanent happiness comes through giving of oneself to others (See comments Jn 13:17). It is the nature of the human spirit to be truly happy when serving others. The self-consumed person, therefore, can never be truly happy.

2:12-16 Happiness could not be found in wealth and activities. Therefore, the king turned to exercising the mind in wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom does prevent getting involved in senseless folly, and thus the wise person uses his wisdom

to guide himself away from foolish behavior. But since the final end of both the wise and foolish is the grave, then there is vanity in much learning. If one's learning does not lead him to focus in life on that which is above life, then his much learning is useless in acquiring that which makes one happy. ***No remembrance:*** The wise man does not have the privilege of being remembered by the living. Thus knowledge, though prized by men, does not guarantee that one will establish a legacy among men. Men will learn the knowledge of a previous generation of scholars, but will forget the scholars.

2:17-23 ***I hated life:*** The Teacher found that with all that life offered it could not provide peace. Thus life without God is meaningless and without peace of mind. There is nothing in life that one can do that would add meaning to life, if life is to be lived without God. One of the greatest deceptions of Satan is to bring people to a level of happiness in life that is satisfying, and thus one does not aspire to those things that are beyond this life. ***I must leave it:*** When one dies, he leaves everything. What bothered the Teacher was that everything for which he had worked must be left to one who did not work for it. In this case, he wondered if the person who inherited his wealth would be wise enough not to squander that for which he had worked so hard to amass. The son who did not work to build the empire of his father will often squander the inheritance of his father's labors. Because the Teacher had experienced this in the lives of so many people, it brought him to despair. If one works to amass wealth, then he would do well to give of his wealth while living, and thus enjoy the fruit of happiness that comes from giving to others. There is a greater use of wealth than building an inheritance for those who will consume it upon themselves.

2:24-26 ***Enjoy good in his labor:*** Living simply for the purpose of gaining wealth is folly. One should have enough in life in order to live without worry. A person should be in a position to enjoy his work, without his work being his obsession. ***Who can have enjoyment without Him:*** This should be one's focus in life. It is the theme of the book. One can have true joy in his labors only when he is laboring with God in his life. Life is vain if labor is only for survival on this earth. But when one works in view of eternal life to come, then that which he earns is used in life for the glory of God. God gives wisdom in order that men understand the meaning of life, that life is for the glory of God, and not for oneself. God gives knowledge in order that man comprehend the work of God in His creation. The result is that man labors with joy, knowing that though he lives in a world of suffering, all things will work together for the good of those who love Him (Rm 8:28).

Dealing With The Facts Of Life
(3:1 – 5:20)

Outline: (1) A world of order (3:1-8), (2) The foundation of faith (3:9-15), (3) The problem of sin and death (3:16-22), (4) Disappointments of life (4:1-16), (5) The problem of (5:1-7), (6) Vanity of possessions (5:8-20)

Chapter 3
A WORLD OF ORDER

3:1-8 In Hebrew poetry, the Teacher expressed in these verses his philosophical view of the world. These are not words that express the fatalistic occurrence of events from which one cannot escape. These verses express a divine order of things into which one must plug his life in order to enjoy the contentment that comes from knowing that God has all things under control. Thus the Teacher deals with the actions of man, not things that are established as inevitable. Since the series of statements are in poetry, one would not assume that the interpreter must understand every statement as literal. There are symbolic meanings to the statements that lead us to understand the sovereignty of God over an environment wherein man is allowed freedom of will to exist. ***Born ... die:*** God has established the natural process of procreation. No man in his physical body can live forever. ***Plant ... harvest:*** God established seasons during which man should plant and harvest crops for the sustenance of life. ***Kill ... heal:*** God has established law by which justice must be served to the guilty, as well as a time for reconciliation between the forgiving. ***Break down ... build up:*** The old buildings stricken with mildew and decay should be destroyed, and new buildings constructed to replace them. ***Weep ... laugh:*** There is an appropriate time for weeping over things that are sad, as well as a time to rejoice over things that are good. ***Mourn ... dance:*** There is an appropriate time to mourn over the death of friends and family, as well as a time to dance over joyous events. ***Cast away stones ... gather stones:*** There is a time for casting stones out of the land in preparation of the soil for a vineyard, and a time to gather them to build a fence around the vineyard. ***Embrace ... refrain from embracing:*** There is a time to embrace for friendship, and a time to reject an unrighteous person from being a companion. ***Gain ... lose:*** There is time for profit, and a time to give of one's wealth. ***Keep ... cast away:*** There are times to retain what one has. But for improvement or security in life, there is a time to discard that which one possesses. ***Tear ... sew:*** Metaphorically, there is a time to tear apart companions or kingdoms, and a time to reunite or sign alliances. ***Silence ... speak:*** Speaking at the appropriate time with words of wisdom will heal and bring parties together. There is a time to be silent in order to avoid conflict, and a time to speak in order to bring reconciliation. ***Love ... hate:*** There is a time to manifest love for reconciliation, but a time to cause division because one detests sin and betrayal. ***War ... peace:*** There is a time to guarantee freedom by opposing those who would bring nations into bondage, and a time to celebrate because opposing parties have agreed to terms of peace.

THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

3:9-15 ***Eternity in their hearts:*** Man was created a religious being. It is natural for him to seek that which is beyond the physical world. It is unnatural to deny God. No civilization of the world has been discovered that does not have a concept of a supreme being. ***Work that God has done:*** All that God has created is good (Gn 1:4,12,18,21, 25,31). When man sinned, and was driven from the garden of Eden, God destined that he toil with his hands for his survival. One thus works to live, but if he works only to live in this life, then

eventually his toil will end in frustration. We must understand that our toil in life is not for life alone, but for others in this life and that which is beyond life. With God in view, one works for his own good, but also for the good of others. Though we will never in this life understand the totality of God's work, we must work to the best of our knowledge in compliance with the plan of God for creating this world. By doing this, we come to understand why God created all things. We begin to understand why He destined us to labor in this world for the purpose of stimulating fear and obedience. ***What is has been already:*** God created an orderly universe. The uniformity by which the universe is continued by natural laws guarantees the future. We must not think, therefore, that we have discovered something new in life. Others have already lived through similar events through which men commonly live every day in this world.

THE PROBLEM OF SIN & DEATH

3:16-22 Life is complex when there are contradictions in moral behavior among men. The contradictions are manifested in the fact that where there should have been justice, there was wickedness. Iniquity was in the place of righteousness. A good God created a good world. However, in His creation there is evil. The existence of evil is the result of man being created a free-moral individual who could choose. Immoral men choose evil and consequently inflict great suffering in the lives of others. God, however, will stand just in judgment by bringing the free-moral works of all men into account in a final judgment (2 Co 5:10). The supposed contradictions that we see in the world, therefore, will eventually be sorted out in the just judgment of God of all things. ***The estate of the sons of men:*** The status of all men is the same as all animals in reference to the body. All die and return to the dust of the earth. ***The spirit of man:*** The view of the Teacher in the context of the statements in verse 21 is not in reference to immortality. He was simply giving a statement in reference to man's observation of the death of both man and animals. From this view point, man does not know the aftermath of either man or animals when either die. That the spirit of man does return to God (12:7) is not in the mind of the Teacher in this context. To use this passage to affirm that there is an immortal spirit within animals is to assume something that is not in the meaning of what the Teacher is trying to convey. Animals have not been given immortal spirits as men. This is the point of the Teacher's thought. If there is no life beyond this life, then we simply die as animals, who have no immortal soul.

Chapter 4
DISAPPOINTMENTS OF LIFE

4:1-3 What is stated in this context is probably the Preacher's continuation of thoughts that were made in reference to 3:16. ***Oppressions:*** The social and political environment sometimes produces a society wherein there is no freedom. The Teacher says that the dead do not have to live under the tyranny of the dictatorship of an oppressing king. He says that it is better for those who have not yet been born into such an evil world.

4:4-6 This is a world wherein one person envies the skills of another. There is competition of one against another. There is no satisfaction or peace of mind when working because one envies the work of another. A person never feels that he is good enough because he continually measures himself against the accomplishments of others. Nevertheless, one must work lest he consume himself away in poverty, or separate himself from friends and relatives because he has sought to live off their means. It is thus better to live in contentment with a little, than having great wealth that comes with the turmoil of competitive work in reference to one's neighbor.

4:7,8 To work only for one's self is to live a life of loneliness. But if one works in companionship with friends and family, then his work is satisfying. There is contentment in working for the benefit of others (See comments At 20:34).

4:9-12 The wisdom of two working together is that one must make an effort to find others with whom to work. Cooperation with others adds meaning to one's own efforts. Companionship is the result of working in order to help others. Those who do good to others will never be working alone, for their good works will draw others to their side. Selfless people are never lonely people.

4:13-16 There is an ambiguous nature to the Hebrew construction of these verses. Reference may be to Jeroboam who fled into Egyptian exile, but later became the king of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kg 11:26-43; 12:1-33). He was not born of royal blood, but was given kingship over the ten northern tribes of Israel. ***Wise youth:*** Though people may admire and covet the position of a king, it is better to be a wise youth than an old king who is too proud to receive instruction. You are wise when they understand that wisdom is not confined to those in power.

Chapter 5
THE PROBLEM OF VAIN PROMISES

5:1-3 One must guard himself against irreverent behavior while living in the presence of God (See comments Rm 12:1,2). One must always be receptive to the instructions of God, for such portrays a godly person. Godly people search the Scriptures daily, for they realize that God is talking to them through the Scriptures (See comments At 17:11). It is better to obey God than to legalistically perform religious rites (See comments 1 Sm 15:22; Mt 23; intro. to Gl). The problem with the foolish is that they do not understand that they are living contrary to the will of God. Many foolish religious people who have created religions after their own desires or traditions do not realize that they are vainly worshiping God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). ***Let your words be few:*** See comments Js 2:1-10 (see Js 1:19,26). Too much speaking eventually leads one to saying those things that are not true, or making promises that one cannot keep. ***A dream comes:*** One can set goals. However, he must work hard in order to reach those goals.

5:4-7 ***Vow a vow:*** When one made a vow before God, it was a self-imposed law that he had to keep (Dt 23:21-23). If he did not keep the vow, he sinned against God, for he had made a promise to God and did not keep it. It is good to make a vow (promise) before God, because in doing such one

sets spiritual goals for himself in order to bring glory to God. ***Your flesh to sin:*** One should not allow his mouth to bring him into sin. ***Messenger:*** Probably a reference to the priest (Ml 2:7). When one makes a vow before a representative of God, then he must keep the vow. If a person does not keep his vows to God, then he makes God angry. ***But fear God:*** One must not do that which would cause God to be angry. Making promises to God and not keeping them, is a mockery of God. One should behave in a way to make God one's friend, not in a manner that would irritate God (Compare Js 4:4).

VANITY OF POSSESSIONS

5:8,9 When oppression exists and justice is not served by officials, then corrupt officials will have to give account to the officials who are over them. The higher officials must give account to the king, and the king to God. God is the final authority before whom all will give account. ***Profit of the land:*** Everyone in the world is dependent on the productivity of the land. Society, therefore, should guard the farmers of the land, lest those in urban centers suffer as a result of oppressed farmers.

5:10-12 The problem with wealth is that it encourages the wealthy to always want more. It is not that wealth is wrong. It becomes wrong only when one has made it his sole purpose in life to become rich (See comments Lk 12:15; 1 Tm 6:10). If one acquires wealth for the purpose of helping others, then he is doing a good work (See At 20:34). The more wealth one has, the more responsibility he has in distributing his wealth to others. He cannot simply take an account of his wealth on a regular basis in order to take pride in what he has accomplished. There is no satisfaction in considering one's wealth, for in doing so, one's mind is not set on eternal goals. True fulfillment in life comes in helping others with what one has gained (See comments 1 Tm 6:6-10,17). ***Sleep:*** The disadvantage of being wealthy is that one has to worry continually about who is going to take his wealth, as well as those who ask for one's wealth.

5:13-17 ***Hoarded:*** See 2:21; 3:16; 4:13. ***Misfortune:*** In this case one hoarded his wealth. However, in a bad business adventure to gain more, he lost it all. Subsequently, he had nothing to leave to his son. ***Take nothing from his labor:*** The foolishness of hoarding is based on the principle that all should work for their own livelihood. A son does not have the right to an inheritance, only the privilege. He is responsible for his own livelihood. Upon this principle, therefore, the one who gains much should use some of what he gains for the benefit of others, for he can take nothing to the grave. The one who hoards, therefore, cheats himself because he has lost the opportunity in life of having the satisfaction of doing good to others (See comments Jn 13:17). God is a giver, and in order to be like God (godly) one must behave as God (See comments Js 1:27).

5:18-20 It is right for a man to work for his food, and then enjoy the productivity of his toil (See comments 2 Th 3:6-10). The problem with many is obsessing over what one has acquired, hoarding it, and then seeking more for the sake of becoming wealthy. One must guard against becoming fascinated with his own abilities to acquire riches, and in doing so forget that he must live in a community of needs that must have his help (At 20:34). For those who have given themselves to work in service of others, God answers with the blessing of happiness. If one has no wealth by which he can bless others, then he has his time by which he can serve others. Giving of one's time to others brings the blessing of happiness (Jn 13:17).

Vanity Of Materialism
(6:1 – 8:17)

Outline: (1) Vanity of earthly wealth (6:1-12), (2) Living in a sin-cursed world (7:1-29), (3) Adjusting to an imperfect world (8:1-17)

Chapter 6
VANITY OF EARTHLY WEALTH

6:1,2 In this context it is the man of wealth who has no satisfaction with his wealth. In 2:18-23 the wealth of the rich man was squandered by foolish heirs. In 5:13-17 the wealthy man lost his riches through bad business deals. One may have riches, property and honor among the people, but if his purpose for wealth is to serve his own needs, then he lives a meaningless life. Having the gift to acquire wealth is uselessly wasted if one does not have the gift of giving.

6:3-6 To the Israelites, a large family was a blessing and an occasion for rejoicing. But if one had a large family and found no pleasure in his family, then what would be the value of a large family? If one lived a thousand years, but had no honorable burial by which the living honored him, then the Teacher questioned the value of life. A stillborn baby who never experienced consciousness is better off than a life without meaning. In other words, it is better not to have known life, than to have lived with a life that is empty and void of fulfillment. ***A thousand years twice:*** The longer the unfulfilled life goes, the worse it is. As the stillborn babe, it is better not to have experienced life, than live an emotionally agonizing life. Two thousand years of life without God would be meaningless.

6:7-9 If one's labor is solely for the enjoyment of life, then he will spiritually starve. A person may satisfy the lust of the flesh by enjoying many delicacies, but famish his soul if his thinking is confined to the things of this world. Even if living is for the benefit of acquiring wisdom alone, then one is no better off than the fool who lives selfishly (see 2:12-17). Whether one labors to satisfy himself with great feasts, or acquires great wisdom, both end up in the same place at death. Thus the worldly wise man has no advantage over the fool, if the man of understanding lives only unto himself.

6:10-12 The lesson of the Teacher is pessimistic if all that is in life leads one to a meaningless existence without God. If there is nothing beyond this life, then all that is of life leads one to despair. ***Has already been named:*** God knows the future, but He does not predestine it to happen. In this context, the meaning is that God knows where we are going, but allows our free-moral choices to determine our individual destinies. God has determined the destiny of the world. We individually determine our own destinies within the world, and within God's plan for the world. It is for this reason that man must

connect with God in reference to God's purpose for the existence of the world. If the mind of a person is confined to this world alone, then he will make decisions that are bound to this world, and thus he is destined to bring despair into his own life. Since it was not within the power of man at the time to know what was beyond the grave, then the Teacher concluded that it was imperative that man invest his life in the spiritual wealth of God's will.

Chapter 7
LIVING IN A SIN-CURSED WORLD

7:1-12 This is a chapter of proverbial statements that reveals thoughts of wisdom concerning what is good for man in this life. **1** Wise men live to produce a good reputation for themselves. As perfume draws others to oneself, so a good reputation will draw others who come with opportunities. One should approach life, not as a party, but as an existence that demands one's earnest desire to live a fulfilled life. For this reason, it is better to be serious about life, than to live it foolishly. **2** When a person comes away from a funeral, he takes life more seriously, realizing that it is so brief. We never live long enough to accomplish all that we wish to do. This is especially true for the servant of God who has dedicated himself to the edification of the church and the business of populating heaven. **3** Sorrow makes one think. It makes one examine himself in reference to where he is in life. When one allows himself to have a good cry, he will relieve himself of stored up emotion. **4** The one who seeks to be wise will approach life with seriousness. **5** The humble in heart will welcome the correction of the wise. Listening to the counsel of the wise is better than listening to those who seek to flatter our egos, while at the same time they conceal the truth. **6** The foolish advice of some is like the quick burning thorn bush. It looks good for a moment, but it does not last long enough to cook the food. **7** If a wise man submits to extortion or oppression, he becomes foolish. It is as a bribe offered to an official who distorts judgment. **8** It is better to make one's decision that is based on a final goal, than on things that are only incidental. It is thus best to be patient when making a decision. **9** When one becomes angry, he cannot make an objective decision. He will often make a rash decision that will result in dire consequences with which he must live. **10** A wise person will not complain about the past. Though we may learn from the past, focusing on misfortunes of the past may lead us to make wrong decisions in the present. **11** The greatest inheritance that a parent can leave a child is a heritage of wisdom. ***Those who see the sun:*** That is, man in his earthly life. **12** One's wealth cannot buy a relationship with God. Only wisdom brings one into submission to God, and thus the opportunity to lead the fulfilled life.

7:13,14 The true believer will rejoice in the day of prosperity, as well as in the day of calamity (Js 1:1,2). He will be able to do so because his wealth is not the foundation of his relationship with God. Since we live within the purpose of God for which He created the world, then we must submit to His providential work in His creation, whether it means wealth or poverty.

7:15-20 In this context one must avoid the temptation of being self-righteous, and thus avoiding wickedness. The writer contrasts legal righteousness with immoral living in wickedness. What one must understand is that the rewards or consequences that are experienced in this life are not adequate to determine one's course of life. We reap what we sow. But the true rewards for behavior in this life will be given in the final judgment of all men (See Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9). ***Overly righteous:*** The legalistically pious person seeks to judge others by his own standards of religious behavior. ***Foolish:*** This is the one who is determined to live wickedly. One must not live in the confines of religious extremity, but realize that all men sin and fall short of the glory of God (Rm 3:9,10,23). The self-righteous must understand that he is a sinner. ***Overly wise:*** The one who is puffed up in his wisdom has judged himself foolish. Those who are such have little patience for others. Those who exalt themselves through their great knowledge often judge as ignorant those who have little knowledge. ***Overly wicked:*** All have sinned, and thus one should not add to his sin by deliberately sinning (See comments Hb 10:26). ***He who fears God:*** The one who is directed by the commandments of God will guard himself from following after self-imposed religiosity, as well as overt sin. Wisdom will morally strengthen those who seek to be wise in God's will. ***Does not sin:*** See comments Rm 3:9,10,23.

7:21,22 A person should not become overly upset with criticism. We must remember that we ourselves have criticized others in the past, and thus our criticism often returns to ourselves.

7:23-26 By reflecting on what he has just written, the Teacher confessed that he had thought he would become wise. Unfortunately, wisdom was out of reach because knowledge and the reality of all things is beyond the reach of normal man (See 8:16,17; Jb 11:7,8). The point of the writer is that no one can have all wisdom, for there is much wisdom that is beyond the grasp of man. ***I applied my heart to know:*** One should certainly seek wisdom and knowledge. In doing this we can discover that wickedness is to follow after folly. One learns that foolishness is madness when compared to the consequences of both wickedness and foolishness in this life and the judgment to come. ***More bitter than death:*** What the Teacher discovered that was worse than death was the woman who used her sexual charms to enslave the foolish (Compare Rv 2:20).

7:27-29 Not all women would scheme to ensnare a man to commit fornication. But what the Teacher found was that some women sought to lay traps for unwise men. Those men who seek out sin are easily entrapped by a woman who would seek to ensnare them. ***Schemes for evil:*** The problem of all men is that they would seek disobedience, rather than conform to the will of God. Their minds have gone astray, and subsequently their behavior follows their evil desires (Js 1:13-15). The allure of sin is always present. If one has given himself over to the schemes of evil, then he will fall victim to all sorts of wickedness. There are consequences for doing evil, and when one does evil, he or she must take ownership of the consequences that result from evil behavior.

Chapter 8
ADJUSTING TO AN IMPERFECT WORLD

8:1-9 These statements are made in reference to the reign of an unjust king, or one's life in a state with a corrupt government. ***I counsel you:*** See comments Rm 13:1-5. ***Oath:*** If one has given his oath to be obedient to the king, then he must follow through with the oath, for the oath was made before God. ***Leave his sight:*** Do not quickly rebel against a king. A person must remember that the king is the final authority of the land, and thus he does what he wants to do. ***Keeps the commandment:*** If one is obedient to the king, he will not suffer the wrath of the king that is poured out on the rebellious. Civil law is established in order to prevent civil disobedience. ***There is a time:*** Though the demands of a king may be unjust, the wise will know that there is a time when the unjust king will meet his judgment. Since one does not know what the future holds, then with patience he should wait until judgment is brought down on an unjust king. No wicked ruler can live beyond death, and thus it may be that one must wait for deliverance in the death of the wicked. ***Neither will wickedness deliver:*** Those who follow wicked schemes to be delivered from a wicked ruler, will only sink further into wickedness. Two wrongs never make something right.

8:10-13 ***Soon forgotten:*** Though an official may be wicked and rule with injustice, he will eventually die. And he will be forgotten. ***Sentence against an evil work:*** One may think that the delay of punishment of the wicked is unjust, however, one must keep in mind that the wicked will eventually face judgment before God. In this context, the Teacher was assured that it would be well with the righteous regardless of any judgment in this life on the wicked. For this reason, the righteous must focus on the blessings of God that they enjoy, regardless of the delay of judgment that will eventually come on unjust rulers. ***As a shadow:*** The wicked cannot prolong his life as a shadow becomes longer as the sun sets. Since it is not within the power of the wicked to prolong their lives, it is sometimes necessary for the righteous to be patient for deliverance when the unjust die.

8:14,15 The Teacher again expressed his despair because of the inequities of life that he saw between the lives of the wicked and the righteous. He saw just men rewarded according to the deeds of the wicked. He saw that the wicked received that which should be given to the righteous. In a world where inequities existed, his conclusion to the matter was that one must simply eat, drink and be merry in the moment. This may be true if one's focus is only on this world (3:22; 5:18). But if one understands the purpose for which God created the world, then the philosophy of life—"eating and drinking"—is worldly. Life is more than that which is of this world.

8:16,17 If a person focuses solely on the world in order to understand the purpose of the world, then he will be frustrated, for he will not discover the purpose of the world. The Teacher lost sleep over trying to understand the meaning of life in a world that seems to have gone wrong. By focusing exclusively on the world, one cannot understand the good that is in life. The point by which we could conclude the matter is that without God, even the wisest person in the world cannot come to an understanding of the purpose of life in a world filled with evil and suffering (See Is 55:6-11). The answer to why humanity suffers can be answered only in view of the fact that there is a God who has a purpose for the existence of the world.

Living Within The Hands Of God
(9:1 – 10:20)

Outline: (1) Living with the inevitability of death (9:1-18), (2) Disruptions of life through folly (10:1-20)

Chapter 9
LIVING WITH THE INEVITABILITY OF DEATH

9:1-3 ***In the hand of God:*** The Teacher is almost fatalistic in these pronouncements. He sees that one is born into the world without any advantage concerning his faith. It seems that he is saying that all people come into the world on an equal basis. God is working His purpose for the world, but man must resign himself to work himself throughout life until he is eventually conquered by death. The Teacher thus portrays death as the end of all things in reference to the living. He writes from the perspective of the worldly man ("sons of men") who has no hope beyond the grave.

9:4-6 Once one is dead, he no longer has any influence in this world. But while he is alive, he has all the hope that is presented by this world. The living enjoy the benefits of life, whereas the dead are cut off from what happens in life. The advantage of the dead is that they no longer suffer from the calamities that are presented to the living.

9:7-10 ***Eat ... drink ... merry:*** This is the philosophy of life for one who has no concept of God, and thus no hope beyond life (See 2:24; 3:12,22; 5:18; 8:15). If life is all there is, then certainly one must live life to the fullest by partaking of all that life offers. One of the serendipitous aspects of faith is that one can live life for others, since his life will go beyond this world. The worldly selfishly live for themselves, for they do not believe in a life beyond this world. ***God now accepts your works:*** The meaning is probably a fatalistic view of life, that is, since one cannot truly know God's way, then one must make the most of life. This is certainly a world view that is mostly confined to this world. But in view of the little revelation that was given in the Old Testament concerning life after death, then the Teacher, in his portrayal of the normal man, resigned himself to the best that God had to offer. If there is no existence beyond this life, then the best that God would have for man is existence in this life. Nevertheless, the most successful person in life, with the best family and neighbors, is left with the conclusion that life is vanity if all there is are the things of this world. Life would not be worth living if this world of suffering were all there was to life. ***Whatever your hand finds to do:*** This statement is in view of the philosophy of the one who believes that this life is all that man has. In order to enjoy this life, therefore, one must be diligent in his work. God meant that man work with his hands in order to enjoy that which life has to offer (Compare Jn 9:4). But the believer works for that which is beyond this life. His work is not in vain, therefore, because his works will following him into eternity (1 Co 15:58; Rv 14:13).

9:11,12 ***Time and chance:*** Time will eventually catch up with a man, and he will die. Before he dies, however, he may by chance suffer from some misfortune in life. ***Does not know his time:*** The wise person on earth does not know his time of death, for he could die at any moment. Through wisdom and the limitations of man's own power, one can win races and accomplish great feats. However, man can accomplish only so much. He is limited and he is mortal. Beyond the limitations of man, God has determined His own destiny for the world, a destiny that is not affected or determined by the efforts of man. It is the task of every man to discover God's plan for the existence of man, and then live according to His will.

9:13-18 We are not told the true events from which the Teacher takes this story that exalts wisdom. The story reveals that the humblest of society can have the power of wisdom that can deliver an entire city. In this case, once the city was delivered, the residents forgot the poor man. However, they certainly did not forget that the city was delivered because wisdom was exercised by its inhabitants, for the story is here repeated by the Teacher. The Teacher concluded that there was great strength in wisdom. Wisdom will be remembered, though those who possessed the wisdom will be forgotten.

Chapter 10
DISRUPTIONS OF LIFE THROUGH FOLLY

10:1-4 This context is introduced in 9:18. One careless sin will undo a person's great work to build a good reputation. One's unfaithfulness will damage his spirituality and bring doubt into the minds of others concerning his integrity. ***Right hand:*** The right hand represented the good and right, whereas the left hand represented that which was dark and evil. If one makes hasty judgments without considering all the facts, then he advertises that he is a fool. If a person talks too much, then he will eventually speak that which is not true, or more than he knows, and thus advertise his foolishness. If one is too hasty to resign his position, even though charged by an official, he is a fool.

10:5-7 A political problem is here under consideration. It is the problem of appointing incompetent officials to positions of influence, when at the same time, marginalizing the wise (Pv 19:10; 30:21,22). If the wise are not incorporated within the governing structures of a nation, the nation is doomed to ruin.

10:8-11 In the normal works of life, there are inherent dangers. Therefore, one must exercise wisdom when carrying out his normal works of life. Fools are often revealed by their lack of common sense when doing their work. Before a task is undertaken, wisdom must be exercised. While the task is in the process of being accomplished, wisdom must be used to successfully complete the task.

10:12-15 The foolish man is the victim of himself. He destroys himself through his own words and actions. In this context, reference is to officials who are in positions where their incompetence is manifested to everyone. A politician who speaks out of ignorance of events and issues will soon destroy his political life. ***Full of words:*** One of the first signs of a foolish man is that he speaks before he has given thought to what he should say. Through much speaking, he reveals his own social insecurity, or his desire for attention. Invariably, his much speaking will reveal that he cannot survey the present in order to predict the future. Even the wise have a difficult time anticipating the future by weighing present circumstances. ***How to go to the city:*** The many words of the fool wearies people for they come to understand that he does not have enough sense even to find his way to the city.

10:16-20 A nation is in trouble when the king is inexperienced and the officials feast in the morning, having their judgment twisted because of drunkenness during the feast (See Is 5:8-23; Jr 51:57; Hs 7:13; Am 6:1). But if the king has grown up at the feet of a father who tutored him in the affairs of state and governance, then the nation prospers under wise leadership. Such leaders will establish feasts at appropriate times when intoxicated officials do not have to pronounce judgments for the people. ***The building decays:*** These proverbial statements would probably define the preceding incompetent officials. While they indulge themselves in drunken feasts and look to their own needs, the nation deteriorates. When officials maintain their positions for their own self-interests, a nation will decay into ruin. Officials of nations should be in their offices for the sake of the people. They are officials to serve the people, not that the people should serve them. ***Do not curse the king:*** Regardless of incompetent and self-serving officials, government is ordained by God in order to prevent anarchy among the people (Rm 13:1-7). The worst government is better than no government at all (8:1-5). Therefore, one should respect the government and be cautious about speaking against government officials, lest he encourage rebellion.

Recommendations For Happiness
(11:1 – 12:14)

Outline: (1) The benevolent and industrious life (11:1-6), (2) The joyous life (11:7,8), (3) God-focused youth (11:9 – 12:8), (4) Worship and obedience (12:9-14)

Chapter 11
THE BENEVOLENT & INDUSTRIOUS LIFE

11:1-6 In chapters 11 & 12 the Teacher is more optimistic about life. He begins with a series of proverbial statements of truth. ***Cast your bread:*** Live generously and benevolently toward others. The figure comes from possible business adventures that are somewhat hazardous. Regardless of the hazard for failure, one must sow. ***Give ... to seven:*** Though one might not receive anything in return, true giving is not based on wanting something in return. In order to enjoy a happy life, one must give (See comments Mt 5:44,45; Jn 13:17). ***Where the tree falls:*** One establishes the pattern of his life by what he does. One determines his future by what he does in the present. Once a pattern of life is established, it is difficult to change it, for we find security in tradition. ***Observes the wind:*** If one waits for a calm day in order to cast forth his seeds in planting, then he will possibly never sow his seeds, for the wind may continue day after day. What seems to be the context is that there are uncertainties about life and work.

We do not live in a perfect and predictable world where we can determine the seasons or times for business. Therefore, by faith one must launch out. ***Sow your seed:*** Doing nothing will certainly produce nothing. One must not be indecisive, but determine to go forward. The industrious person will always succeed, though he may have temporary setbacks.

THE JOYOUS LIFE

11:7,8 These are what appear to be contradictions. The Teacher began in the book by saying that death was better than life (4:2,3). However, this philosophy must be considered in the context that a meaningless life without God is not worth living. Then he states that life is better than death (9:4). It is better when considering the fact that one can live a productive life in being benevolent to others. If one lives for others, then life is worth living. He now comes in this context to the conclusion that though there is darkness in life, there is room for joy. ***Nothingness:*** We must understand the world view of the Teacher in view of the limited revelation the Jews had in reference to life after death. Because of this limited revelation, the Teacher affirmed that one should live joyfully, but remember that the days of darkness in life will eventually end in the final darkness of death.

GOD-FOCUSED YOUTH

11:9,10 The conclusion of the Teacher's discourse begins with verse 9 and continues to the end of the book. ***The days of your youth:*** Young people should not waste their youth on foolish living. In view of the fact that the youth of one's body will soon vanish away, one should use his youthful days for productivity. A person should live in a manner that is controlled by the fact that he knows that he will give account of all his deeds (2 Co 5:10). Knowing that one will give account of himself before God brings sobriety to life, and thus guards one from wasting himself on the vanities of this world.

Chapter 12

12:1-8 ***Remember your Creator:*** If one builds a spiritual life from the days of his youth, when he becomes old, he will not live with the regret of having wasted his youth on foolish things. ***Evil days:*** This would be the difficult days of old age (See 2 Sm 19:33-35). Youth should use their days to do things for God and others before they grow old and lose their mobility. ***No pleasure in them:*** Living with the aches and pains of old age is not a joy. The body of the aged slows down before the mind, and thus the aged live with the frustration of not being able to do what one's mind desires to do. In old age one begins to realize his mortality, being frustrated that he will not be able to live long enough to accomplish all his dreams. ***Darkened:*** One's eyesight is almost lost in old age. ***Clouds:*** Despair over unfulfilled goals. ***Rain:*** Tears shed over things of the past. ***Keepers of the house:*** The arms and hands of the body grow feeble. ***Grinders:*** Chewing is difficult because one has lost many of his teeth. ***Windows:*** It becomes difficult to see through the eyes. ***Doors:*** One's hearing becomes difficult. ***One will rise up:*** Sleep will be difficult. ***That which is high:*** Because of unsteadiness, one becomes fearful of heights. ***Fear ... in the way:*** Walking becomes difficult. ***Almond tree:*** Symbol for a graying head. ***Grasshopper:*** Even a small thing will be a burden to bear. ***Desire will fail:*** Sexual desires will cease, or the natural loss of appetite. ***Silver cord:*** The cord is cut and the golden bowl (life) is broken. Life is the pitcher by which water is taken from the fountain. It is the wheel by which water is lifted from the cistern. Eventually, everything begins to break down. Since the body was not made to last a great length of time, it begins to break down. ***Dust:*** See Gn 2:7. ***Vanity of vanities:*** Life in and of itself is vain, for it is so short and fragile. In old age one realizes that life is short. Youth believe that there is no end to life. The aged weep over the brevity of life, and thus feel that it was a vain adventure.

WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE

12:9-12 The writer ends his discourse as other inspired writers, writing as if the words are by another person (See 1 Co 7:25). What is said here is the writer's personal conclusion to the purpose of life. It is a realization of the purpose of life to which all men must come. ***He taught:*** The wisdom of the Teacher was in the fact that he wanted to impart to others that which he had learned by his own experience. We do not forget, however, that it was the Holy Spirit who wanted this wisdom recorded for us today (See 2 Tm 3:16). And since it was the Holy Spirit giving us this wisdom, then we understand that more is to be learned from these words than simply the experiences of Solomon's life. ***Words of truth:*** We would understand this in view of the fact that the Teacher composed this document by the inspiration of the Spirit. Though the Spirit would have allowed the writer to search out and compose, we conclude that the final writing and composition was by the direction of the Spirit (See comments 2 Pt 1:20,21). The Holy Spirit used the experiences of men to teach us things concerning truth and behavior. By revealing truth through the experiences of those who lived contrary to that which is right, we have a living illustration of what not to do. ***Goads ... nails:*** As a goad spurs on the ox, and nails (probably pegs) penetrate the wood for construction, so the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword (Hb 4:12). It can spur on one and build one up (At 20:32). When we observe the negative results of living contrary to the word of God, we are encouraged not to live a disobedient life. When we observe the good life of those who obeyed God, we are encouraged to be obedient. Truth, therefore, is revealed through the obedience or disobedience of individuals. The Bible contains examples of negative and positive responses to the truth of God. *"Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our admonition ..."* (See comments Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). ***Shepherd:*** This is a reference to God who is the source of wisdom that is from above. ***Many books:*** Many books (scrolls) have been written to understand the meaning of life. But any book that discards God as the Creator, is worthless in determining a correct world view. It is not within man to discover the wisdom that is from above. God is the source of all things, and thus, if one rejects or ignores God, he will never begin to understand that which is reality. Life will thus remain

meaningless for those who refuse to believe in God. If one does believe in God, and yet is disobedient to His will, he will not come to a knowledge of the one true and living God. One can never understand the love of God who lives in an unloving manner. ***Fear ... keep:*** No greater conclusion could be made to a book that was written for the purpose of revealing truth through the disobedience of one who did not live according to the will of God in reference to marital relationships. Life is not about life itself, but about worship of God and obedience to His will (Mt 6:33). This is the theme that the Teacher wanted to convey by focusing on the vanities of life without God. In this case it was not life without believing in God, but life in disobedience to the law of God concerning marital relationships. Solomon lived contrary to the will of God in this matter, and thus experienced first hand the vanity of life if one does not follow God's will. He lived the materialistic life, and thus revealed to us the vanity of a life that focuses exclusively on the things of this world. Life is vain, if at the grave we conclude that an individual has come to annihilation. The motivation for keeping the commandments of God is the fact that all will be held accountable for their deeds in this life (2 Co 5:10). If there is no consciousness of a final judgment, then there is no motivation for keeping the commandments. But when obedience is stirred by fear of God, then one's life has meaning. Life is more than what the world has to offer. In order to make life meaningful, one must consider what God has to offer. Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"* (Jn 10:10). This abundant life comes only to those who act on their belief in God. Those who are obedient to the will of God enjoy life to its fullest. They understand the purpose for which God created all things. In times of great trial, therefore, they understand that they will exist beyond this world, for this world is not their home.

Song of Solomon

WRITER

The first verse of this book ascribes its writing to Solomon, king of Israel (See intro. to Ec). Though some have assumed that the book was written after the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C., there is no strong evidence within the book that would suggest this late date of writing. We thus assume the traditional view that Solomon was not only the writer, but the one who sought to woo the Shulamite woman to become one of his wives. The book would thus be one of Solomon's 1005 songs (1 Kg 4:32). The theme of the book would support this conclusion, for the writer wanted to teach the devotion of one's true commitment in love, though tempted by wealth and royalty to forsake one's commitment.

DATE

If Solomon composed the book, then the composition would have taken place during his reign. At the time of writing, Solomon had many wives and maidens in Jerusalem, and thus the setting would have been toward the latter part of his 40-year reign. The date of writing would have been sometime before his death in 931 B.C.

BOOK

Some interpreters have considered the book to be an allegory of the history of Israel in her relationship with God. Others have used the book as an analogy of the love between the church and Christ. But these interpretations are forced since there is no contextual reason to consider them to be correct. The best interpretation is often the most obvious. And thus, when viewed in the historical context of the love poetry of Egypt during the times of Solomon, it is best to consider the book in the context of a love relationship between two people who had committed themselves to one another. Though Solomon, the Shulamite woman, and her beloved may set the immediate context for the love triangle, we would assume that the Holy Spirit placed this book of love in the Scriptures for the purpose of revealing the committed relationship that two people should maintain toward one another. By focusing on this relationship, the book teaches against the practice of polygamy, for no relationship as is defined in the book could exist between a man and several wives. In fact, in the triangle of characters in the book, one theme would be directed specifically against polygamy. Solomon's appeals to the Shulamite were questionable, for the Shulamite saw that his devotion to her could never be as the devotion of her true beloved who would become her only husband. Solomon had many wives. But the Shulamite was the only love of her beloved. In this sense, therefore, the king's proposals were shallow of commitment to take her as his only affectionate wife for life.

God wanted us to understand the sanctity between one man and one woman that must exist in a marriage relationship. This commitment must begin before marriage in order that both parties in the relationship understand and feel confident in the commitment to one another. The Shulamite's resistance to the appeals of wealth and royalty clearly manifested her commitment to her beloved. She turned away from the greatest the world had to offer in order to remain true to her commitment to her beloved. This book, therefore, is a definition of Paul's exhortation in Ep 5:25-33, that husbands and

wives commit themselves to one another until death.

In the Hebrew text the book is written in poetry, not prose. Since the poetry is in the style of the orient, the figures are descriptive. Characteristic with most ancient poetical literature, there is no indication of a change in scenes or characters in the narrative. The interpreter, therefore, must be cautious in defining the change in speeches from one character to another, as well as the setting or events when the speeches took place. The speeches of the characters are not dialogues, but monologues that express dramatic action or feeling. The lack of identification of who is speaking was intentional in the sense that the writer wanted us to focus on the content of what everyone was saying in reference to one another in the love triangle. Who was speaking at any time was not as important as the themes that are revealed through the encounter of personalities and their motives and commitments.

The leading characters of the story are Solomon (the king of Israel), a young Shulamite maiden from the country of northern Israel, and her beloved to whom she had made a commitment to marriage. The daughters of Jerusalem would be the court attendants of the palace in Jerusalem, or possibly the concubines of Solomon. Mention also is made of the Shulamite's brothers who were of her family in the farming country of northern Israel. All these characters are brought together into a poetical song of love that glorifies monogamous love relationships. There is no other book in the Bible that so uniquely portrays the love relationship that should exist between a man and a woman in the bond of marriage (See comments Ep 5:22-33).

Introduction
(1:1-4a)

Outline: (1) The authorship (1:1), (2) The setting (1:2-4a)

Chapter 1

THE AUTHORSHIP

1:1 ***Song of songs:*** This was a superlative in Hebrew poetry. This phrase identifies the book as one of Solomon's 1005 songs (See 1 Kg 4:32), and thus signifying to us that this book is written in poetry and not prose. ***Solomon:*** Since the word "which" in Hebrew can be translated "by," "for," or "about," it is not conclusive that the authorship of the book can be attributed to Solomon (see introduction). However, in reference to the theme of committed love, Solomon fits the character who would represent the temptation to the Shulamite to forsake her commitment to her beloved.

THE SETTING

1:2-4a The Shulamite woman (6:13) was possibly abducted from her home in order to be brought first to the king's summer home in the mountains of Lebanon. She was taken to the king's chambers of the summer home and the king's maidens devoted themselves to minister to her. ***The maidens love you:*** Upon her arrival at the summer palace, the maidens (daughters) of Jerusalem, who were of the king's harem at the summer home, gave her moral support. The maidens reassured the Shulamite that all would be well, for she would be the center of their affection. They would be devoted to her because she was the focus of the king's love. Though the Shulamite asked that the charioteer take her away, he departed, leaving her to the fate of being tempted by the wealth and royalty of the king. The setting of the story, therefore, begins first in the Shulamite's homeland in northern Palestine, and then is intensified when the king brings her in a royal caravan to the capital city of Jerusalem. In the royal palace of Jerusalem, the appeal of the king would intensify when the Shulamite was offered the love of a king, and a life-style of royalty. It was a situation where her morals could be tested.

The First Encounter
(1:4b – 2:7)

Outline: (1) The Shulamite and maidens (1:4b-6), (2) Solomon and the Shulamite (1:7 – 2:7)

THE SHULAMITE & MAIDENS

1:4b-6 This first encounter with the king was planned in the summer residence of the king in northern Palestine, the homeland of the Shulamite. It seems that she is in shock concerning her fate. However, the maidens are comforting with exhortation. From 4b it seems that the dialogue begins between the king and the Shulamite maiden, though some Bible students have affirmed that the beloved of the Shulamite is at first in the scenes of the drama. ***Dark:*** The maidens are amused at the darkness of her skin that had been parched by the sun. Fair skin was prized and a sign of royal care in the palaces. But the Shulamite's skin was deeply tanned. Because her brothers were for some reason angry with her, they consigned her to work in the vineyards in the heat of the sun. ***Own vineyard:*** She had neglected her own skin while working in the vineyards. She had the skin of a farm laborer, not the skin of one who had dwelt in the luxury of palaces.

SOLOMON AND THE SHULAMITE

1:7 Homesick, she yearned for her home and the company of her country sweetheart. She cried out, wondering why she should be as a veiled harlot wandering among the flocks of the king's friends.

1:8 One of the maidens responded with a rebuke that the Shulamite should not remind the king of the shepherds of his kingdom. The sarcastic rebuttal of the maiden was meant to scorn the Shulamite for her lack of appreciation for the opportunity of her predicament. The king's maidens would later wonder why one would not want to dwell with the king in the luxury of the nation's palace. Their questioning of her rejection of the king's luxury underscores a primary theme of the book. Committed love is not dependent on one's physical environment. True love is identified by the continuation of

one's commitment regardless of the environment in which one lives.

1:9-11 The king interrupted the quarrel between the Shulamite and the maiden. He interrupted with compliments concerning the Shulamite's beauty. **Horse:** In oriental literature this was a compliment, for horses were prizes of beauty. One also took great pride in his possession of great horses. It is possible that the king here expressed his desire to possess the Shulamite as he had the other women of his harem. By the end of the drama, however, the Shulamite would not allow herself to be possessed.

1:12-14 The Shulamite reminded the king that she had given her love to another, and thus could not accept his proposal of love. ***His table:*** The king's first appeal to the Shulamite was to bring her into the dining environment of royalty. But while everyone was seated at the banquet feast of a royal party, she reminded herself that she was in a relationship with her beloved at his table in the humble vineyards of the farmlands. In that environment, her perfumes appealed to her beloved. But now in the king's chambers her fragrance could go forth to her betrothed. She thus carried the remembrance of her former beloved on her bosom as a bag of myrrh. Even during the royal occasion of a kingly banquet she could not forget her beloved.

1:15 The king was persistent. Noticing that her mind was far away with her lover in the vineyards, he did not accept her reluctance to respond to the occasion of the banquet.

1:16,17 Our bed is green: She reminded the king during his advances that she was comfortable with her betrothed in a country setting. She preferred that environment more than the king's palaces.

Chapter 2

2:1 Verse 1 was assigned to the words of the last speech in reference to the Shulamite's beloved. The application of these statements in reference to who is speaking in the context is left to the discretion of the interpreter.

2:2 The king possibly sensed that the Shulamite questioned his devotion to one person in marriage, since he had so many wives and maidens. Her integrity was manifested in poetical drama by her refusal to become one of many in a polygamous relationship.

2:3-7 ***My beloved:*** In order to dissuade the king's advances, in her mind the Shulamite things about her love relationship with her true beloved. ***His fruit:*** As the apple is pleasing to the sight and tastes, so was the presence of her first true love. Her love for him was still in his heart, and thus she yearned to stand under the protection of his shade and enjoy the sweet fruit of conversation with him. ***Sustain me:*** It could be that at this time in the scene, the king withdrew from the presence of the Shulamite. Verses 5-7 could thus be directed to the maidens. Regardless of her audience, the Shulamite maiden spoke with passion concerning her love for her beloved farmer. ***Left hand ... right:*** At this time during her ordeal, she reassured herself that it would only be her former beloved's arms that would embrace her with true love. ***Do not arouse:*** The passion of sexual intercourse must never be aroused outside the limits of God's intended relationship between a man and a woman. And that intended relationship is in the bond of marriage. Young people should never place themselves in a situation where their sexual passions are aroused to the point of being out of control.

The Second Encounter
(2:8 – 3:5)

Outline: (1) The beloved's visit (2:8-17), (2) The first dream (3:1-5)

THE BELOVED'S VISIT

2:8-10a Verses 8-17 describe the visit of the Shulamite's beloved shepherd who comes from her former country environment. He comes to visit her while she remains confined in the summer house of the king. This may be an actual visit by the beloved, however, it may simply be an imaginary visit that took place only in the mind of the Shulamite. If it was imaginary, then we assume that she was reciprocating her love toward him.

2:10b-15 What is stated by the beloved is a love song. It is a love song that is based on the beauties of nature, which beauties would appeal to a young woman who was the social product of a country environment. All that is stated in the song appeals to the natural instincts of the Shulamite in order to express the yearning of the beloved that she return to him. If the scene is imaginary, then the Shulamite is revealing that she longs for the natural setting where she experienced her first true love with her beloved. ***Foxes:*** Reference in this song may figuratively be that the beloved take captive the foxes, a reference to the king's proposals. As mischievous foxes, the proposals were threatening their first and true commitment to one another. The little foxes were spoiling the relationship between the Shulamite and her first beloved. Little things have a tendency to break down a love relationship between two people.

2:16,17 In response to the plea of the beloved, the Shulamite responded with two brief statements in song. ***My beloved is mine:*** There was certainly some stress in their relationship with one another because the king had taken her from her beloved. But the differences between the Shulamite and her beloved subsided. This is thus a song of reconciliation. ***Feeds among the lilies:*** The beloved was nourished by her affections. Though he lingered with her, it is her desire that he return again to her presence. ***Turn my beloved:*** The Shulamite consigns herself to wait for her beloved. She is content at this time to wait for the day of marriage. Her emotions, therefore, are still joined with her former love, and thus she had not resigned herself to the king's harem. In her mind, she reaffirmed her commitment to her beloved. If the visit was real, then she wanted to reassure him that she was not wavering from her commitment to him. If the visit was imaginary, then we would suppose that she was becoming defensive. She wanted to reassure herself that she would not forsake her commitment to her beloved.

Chapter 3
THE FIRST DREAMS

3:1-5 The young Shulamite is now with her maidens. She tells them of her dream. ***In the nights:*** She had several dreams

night after night. She would then rise to seek her beloved in the city squares. Once she found him, she would then bring him to her mother's dwelling in order to reaffirm her commitment to him. Since she is in Jerusalem, time and distance will not weaken her love for her beloved who was in northern Palestine. ***Do not stir up:*** The sexual passions of love should not be aroused and fulfilled unless in the context of marriage (2:7; 8:4). Thus the Shulamite appealed to the maidens that they not seek to stir her passions toward the king. She revealed her dreams to the maidens concerning her beloved in order that they not dissuade her from forgetting her feelings toward her first love. If the passion of sexual intercourse were to be aroused, it was going to be in the consummation of her marriage with her beloved, and not with the king.

The Third Encounter
(3:6 – 5:1)

Outline: (1) The royal procession (3:6-11), (2) The king's proposal (4:1 – 5:1)

THE ROYAL PROCESSION

3:6-8 A royal procession brings the king and the Shulamite together. It is not revealed whether the king comes to her at the summer house, or she is taken to him in Jerusalem. It seems that Solomon built a special royal carriage for her in order that she be brought to him at the palace in Jerusalem. ***Traveling couch:*** Ancient kings would travel in a room on a mobile platform. It was a means by which royalty traveled from one place to another, being carried in this case by sixty armed men who also protected the king. The couch and the entourage were probably sent to the Shulamite in order to bring her to Jerusalem. The king had tempted her with the royalty of the summer palace and a great banquet, but now his proposals to her would intensify. They would intensify in the setting of the capital of the nation, surrounded with all the luxury of a king's life and the admiration of the people.

3:9-11 ***He made:*** In order to woo the Shulamite, it may have been that Solomon specifically made this traveling couch and sent it to her in order to bring her to Jerusalem. The couch was made of the wood from the home country of the Shulamite. The scent of her homeland, therefore, would accompany her to Jerusalem. ***Lovingly fitted out:*** Reference would be to a work of love done by the maidens in order to appeal to the Shulamite. As other women who were approached by the king, she too should respond to the king's advances as all other maidens had done. The integrity of the Shulamite was manifested in the fact that she was not overwhelmed by the wooing of a king, but remained faithful to her country sweetheart. She did not sacrifice her commitment in order to respond to the politics of a king.

Chapter 4
THE KING'S PROPOSAL

4:1-5 The scene of the triangle of love has now changed from the summer house of the king in northern Palestine to the king's palace in Jerusalem. In this context the words of the king are written as a song that is worded as a typical Syrian song of marriage. ***Hair ... teeth ... lips ... neck ... breasts:*** As the typical man upon his first encounter with a woman, the king wooed her with compliments concerning her physical appearance. He admired her illustrious eyes behind her veil. The whiteness of her teeth and the beauty of her lips sparked admiration in the mind of the king. All those features wherein a woman would be self-conscious concerning her own beauty, the king complimented her. His words, therefore, reassured her that though she was in the presence of the king, she had no reason to be shy, or to feel insecure. The king knew that she was a humble country girl, and thus through his praise of her beauty he sought to set her at ease in his royal presence. She should be reassured in his presence because of the command of her beauty.

4:6 Regardless of the compliments of the king, the Shulamite looked away, yearning for her home in the northern farm country. Without responding to the king, she still longed for the mountain country of Lebanon. Her farming culture had more appeal than the elegance of the king's palace. Herein is revealed the integrity of a great woman. Such reveals why Solomon was so driven to have her as one of his wives. But her integrity also reveals the reason why she could never become one of his harem. Great women save themselves for the commitment of one man for life.

4:7-15 In these words, the king again reassures the Shulamite with compliments concerning her presence. His first praises in verses 1-5 were compliments in reference to her first appearance. He now moves into praise of her character and demeanor. ***No spot:*** In contrast to her country dwelling, she was one fit to be a king's wife. Her integrity made her eligible, but at the same time, it also disqualified her from being in a polygamous relationship with a king who had many wives. ***From Lebanon:*** He sought to take her mind off the mountains of Lebanon, and bring her to the reality of the king's palace in Jerusalem. He would fail in this feat. He abducted the farmer out of the country, but could never take the country out of the farmer. Those who dwell in cities have a difficult time understanding this characteristic of the culture of rural people. ***A garden enclosed:*** This would probably reveal the faithfulness of the Shulamite to her former love. One walked in a garden in order to enjoy the fragrance of the environment. But her garden was closed to the king, and she would not allow Solomon in to the fragrance of her love. She was still true to her beloved country sweetheart. Her monogamous devotion to one man manifested the integrity of her heart. Such integrity was a challenge to the king to woo her earnestly into his own heart. ***Plants:*** Solomon resorted to the beauty of his garden (See 1 Kg 4:33). The metaphors are taken from the natural beauty and fragrance of a garden. As one would seek to be in the presence of such natural beauty, so would one want to be in the presence of the Shulamite. Her demeanor invited people into her presence as a garden invited people in to behold beauty and sweet-smelling fragrances. But she was not inviting him in. There was a wall around her garden (8:10). The king was not allowed in.

4:16 The Shulamite was faithful to her beloved country sweetheart. She continued to reject the king's persistence, and

thus turned her attention from the palace of the king to the refreshing winds that would carry the fragrance of her love far to the north to her beloved. She was his garden, and it was only him whom she sought to enjoy the fragrance of her presence.

Chapter 5

5:1 It was at this point that the king may have become impatient. He now claimed the Shulamite to be his garden, and thus presumed to claim her as his bride. His advances had been rebuffed, and thus he turned away in order to come later with another appeal. There was impatience in the tone of his appeals.

The Fourth Encounter
(5:2 – 6:3)

Outline: (1) The Shulamite's second dream (5:2-8), (2) The Shulamite's song (5:9 – 6:3)

THE SHULAMITE'S SECOND DREAM

5:2-8 Her longing for her country sweetheart was revealed again in her dreams. This was a dream that he had come to her. She dreamed of him speaking to her. ***My undefiled:*** In her dream she revealed that she had kept herself free from any sexual relationship with the king. Her integrity was manifested in the fact that she had kept herself pure. ***I have put off my robe:*** We could assume that verse 3 was not a part of the dream, but the thinking of the Shulamite after she had awakened. However, the words may be a continuation of the visiting beloved in her dream. She had prepared herself for bed, but now she dreamed that he was at the door. At this time in her ordeal with the king, she may be questioning her devotion to her beloved. She dreamed that her beloved was reasoning that she was turning from him, and thus her heart was changing. In her dream her beloved had come a great distance to find her, but how could he now return since she had hesitated in opening the door to him. In her dream, she may have been questioning her own devotion, and thus pictured herself as hesitating to receive him. ***My heart yearned for him:*** She did not open the door quickly to allow him to come in. Though he sought reconciliation (see 2:15), he felt that her love for him might be fading. She may have been frustrated with her predicament, and the distance from her beloved began to weigh down on her. ***Open to my beloved:*** This revealed her true feelings. She had hesitated, but then responded to the feelings of her former commitment to him. She quickly put away her hesitation, and responded to his coming. His love was as the fragrance of perfumes that invited the beloved into her presence. ***My beloved had withdrawn:*** Her welcome came too late. The beloved had left. So in desperation she went in search for him. She searched to the extent that the guards of the city thought she was a prowling woman of the streets. She was thus beaten and wounded. Her dream concluded with an appeal to the maidens that if they come across her beloved, that they tell him that she remains lovesick for him.

THE SHULAMITE'S SONG

5:9 Upon telling her dream to the maidens, they still could not understand why the Shulamite would yearn for the country life over the palaces of Jerusalem (See 1:8). They could not understand why she would not exchange a country beloved for a beloved king. They had accepted the fact that they were a part of Solomon's harem. They could not understand why she would not relent to the fact that she should become another wife of the king.

5:10-16 The Shulamite rebuffed the criticism of the maidens by describing the appeal of her country beloved. In her description of him, she sought to remind herself of the one from whom she was withheld. In her mind, his physical appearance, demeanor and speech were that for which she yearned (See 7:1-5). This is a description of a lovesick woman for a man to whom she had committed herself.

Chapter 6

6:1 This question comes from representatives of the maidens of Jerusalem. The question is in reference to 5:6 where the Shulamite asked concerning the location of her beloved about whom she had dreamed. It is also related to 5:8 where she had asked that they tell her if they found him. Their desire now was to seek her beloved with her. Evidently, by this time in the drama, they too were motivated by her true love for her beloved. As the polygamous maidens of a harem, it would be easy for them to be inspired by being the object of the love of only one man. Their former criticisms, therefore, may have been motivated by their envy of the Shulamite who was loved so much by her beloved. As a part of the harem of Solomon, they enjoyed no such attention.

6:2,3 ***Garden:*** See 4:12-15 & 5:1 where the Shulamite was metaphorically described in reference to a garden scene. The picture here is of her beloved coming to her in order to consummate their marriage. She thus looked forward to a reunion where the consummation of her marriage to him might take place. She may have wavered from her commitment in the presence of the king and the environment of the royal palace in Jerusalem, but she reaffirmed to the maidens that she was still committed to her beloved.

The Fifth Encounter
(6:4 – 8:4)

Outline: (1) Reconciliation and refusal (6:4-12), (2) Appeal and passion for love (6:13 – 8:4)

RECONCILIATION & REFUSAL

6:4-7 The king now revisited the Shulamite in order to contend for her affection. He again complimented the beauty of her physical appearance. He compared her to the beauty of Tirzah (meaning, "beautiful" or "delightful") in her own country, and to Jerusalem ("perfection of beauty") where she now resided. He wooed her with the beauty of a city from her homeland, as well as with the beauty of a city where he desired that in her heart she would take up residence. ***Turn away your eyes:*** It would seem that the integrity and beauty of the Shulamite somewhat intimidated even Solomon, the one who had many wives and concubines. Such would explain the

challenge he felt in wooing her to respond to his wealth and royalty, both of which had little appeal to the country girl from the vineyards of Lebanon.

6:8-10 ***My perfect one:*** Solomon had many wives (1 Kg 11:1-3). At this time in his reign he had the number of wives that is stated here, with maidens that were without number. His appeal here to the Shulamite was that she would be special among so many. He stated that she was the most beautiful. Since she had been a special child, so she would be special in his harem. The other queens and maidens (concubines) who normally should be jealous of her, even gave her praise. In verse 10, the king repeated what the others were saying about the Shulamite. But such a woman as the Shulamite could never be one of many wives, regardless of the promises made by the king. The behavior of his life made a statement that was contrary to the words of his appeal. She would never be just another woman that he had conquered through his courting.

6:11,12 In her continued refusal of the king's proposals, she reminded him of her abduction by him. From the time of her abduction, she became the captive of his obsession and a challenge to be conquered by his wooing. She had been unwillingly detained, and thus rebuffed her suitor. In order for her to be loved sincerely, she must live as a free person. True love does not confine, but sets free in order to draw willingly the loved into one's bosom.

APPEAL & PASSION FOR LOVE

6:13 It may have been that Solomon said that she could go, and she went. If these are the words of the maidens, then they sought to make an appeal to the Shulamite that she return to the presence of the king. She may have simply left the room, and they pleaded that in her rebuff of his advances, that she return to him. ***Two companies:*** Reference here may be to the noun from which the translation is made, that is, Mahanaim (See Gn 32:1,2). If the Shulamite returned to the king, it would be like the angelic dancing between Jacob and the angels who met him at Mahanaim. This introduces the song of admiration that follows in chapter 7.

Chapter 7

7:1-5 This is another description of the Shulamite that is similar to the one given by the king in 5:10-15. The appeal of the song here is that the Shulamite relinquish to the beauty of her body, and thus give in to the proposals of the king. The natural beauty of God's created woman is here magnified in the context of a pure relationship between a man and a woman. God created the beauty of a woman in a manner that would appeal to the created instincts of men who would be attracted by the beauty of a woman. Though in this context emphasis was on the appeal of the outward appearance of the woman to the God-created instincts of man, what is of greater glory in the Shulamite was the appeal of her character. Neither wealth nor fame tempted her to indulge in a sexual relationship with the king of the empire. She maintained her purity though ravished in comments concerning the beauty of her physique. She never allowed her beauty to be used to manipulate the thinking of the king.

7:6-9a We would assign the statements in these verses to the response of the king to the previous song of the maidens. He thus made a final advance to woo her to conform to his desires. He was captivated, both the beauty of her body, as well as the beauty of her integrity. ***I will go up:*** There now seems to be some frustration on the part of the king. His advances had been rebuffed, and thus there may be in his mind at this time the urge to embrace the Shulamite against her will. But forced love only brings the aggressor into the bondage of his own passions. The king knew this, and thus he restrained himself from submitting to his passions.

7:9b-13 Feeling that the king may be at the point of frustration, and thus force her, the Shulamite takes her mind to a far away setting with memories of her beloved. She desired that he escape with her into the vineyards of her homeland, away from the pressure of the proposals of the king. Her response to the king was as intense as his proposals were to her. Though he advanced with intentions that were generated by the appeal of her beauty and character, the Shulamite responded with a portrait of a pure relationship with her country sweetheart. The theme of this love story must not be missed at this point. The theme was that a woman maintain her honor and integrity by guarding her purity. Though approached by wealth and royalty, she must not succumb to the advances of those who would be overcome by her sexual appeal. The Shulamite did not present herself in dress or conduct in any manner that would arouse the sexual urges of the king. On the contrary, she did everything to rebuff his advances. In doing so, she maintained her integrity. And though he was rebuffed, and frustrated, the king maintained his integrity by not forcing himself on her. Thus the king maintained his dignity in the presence of a woman of great integrity.

Chapter 8

8:1-4 These verses probably continue the statements of 7:10-13. It seems that the more intense the king wooed her, the more intense her feelings were generated toward her beloved. ***Would not be despised:*** It was the custom of the time that no affection between a man and a woman should be manifested in public. If such were done, it would bring shame upon both. But at this time in the drama between the king and the Shulamite, the Shulamite sought for the affection of her beloved regardless of where it was manifested. In this context, the Shulamite desired that her beloved come into her mother's house in order that the mother might instruct her as to how she should please him. ***Not stir up:*** See comments 2:6,7.

Romantic Climax
(8:5-14)

Outline: (1) Eulogy of love (8:5-7), (2) Remembrance (8:8-12), (3) Reward of love (8:13,14)

EULOGY OF LOVE

From this point on it seems that the king had resigned himself to the fact that he had no chance of gaining the love of the Shulamite. The Shulamite's loyalty to her beloved was more powerful than his appeal with complimentary words, wealth

and royalty. Since he could not succeed in his advances, the scenes of this poetical drama close with a eulogy of love by the Shulamite.

8:5-7 The book closes in the country setting of northern Palestine from where the Shulamite was taken. The question of the friends in 5a brings us to another turning point in the song. The scene appears to be that the Shulamite was sent away from her royal captivity and allowed to return to her country sweetheart in their homelands of the north. ***Apple tree:*** The two lovers passed the place where they first encountered their love for one another. Under the apple tree her beloved had first awakened her love for him. ***Seal:*** This would be a sign of their commitment to one another. It would be a promise that would eventually lead to matrimony and the consummation of their marriage. ***Jealousy:*** Since her commitment to her beloved would have given rise to jealousy if he were approached by another woman, then she knew that his jealousy had certainly been aroused by her presence with the king. ***The Lord:*** This is the only time the word Yahweh is used in the book. The Shulamite affirmed that God was on her side. She had been taken from her beloved. Justice would be that she return to the one whom she had made lifetime commitments. ***All the substance of his house:*** Solomon sought to gain the Shulamite's love with wealth and royalty. But true love cannot be purchased with the wealth of a king. True love is neither purchased nor relished by things of this world.

REMEMBRANCES

8:8,9 The brothers may have assumed that there would be an imminent marriage of the Shulamite with her beloved. They also had a younger sister who was young and immature. ***If she is a wall:*** That is, if she too, as her sister, resists the advances of unworthy suitors, then the brothers would arrange a wedding for her. But when she grew into womanhood, and became too eager for intimate relationships, or weak in resisting the advances of men, then they as her bothers, would protect her. If she did not build a wall of resistance for herself, they would build it for her.

8:10-12 The Shulamite was a wall of resistance to all the advances that could be offered by this world. She was treated with dignity, offered wealth and fame by a king, and yet she maintained her purity and integrity. Her maturity was manifested in the fact that she did not succumb to anything that would rob her of her purity, or cause her to forsake her commitments to her beloved. ***Solomon has a vineyard:*** If we understand this metaphorically, then the Shulamite was saying that Solomon had many wives (vineyards). He had many keepers (maidens, or concubines) of these vineyards. The Shulamite would not be added to his collection of women. She thought more of herself than to be a conquered prize of royalty and wealth. ***My own vineyard:*** The Shulamite resisted being one of the vineyards of Solomon, and thus she was her own woman as a vineyard for her beloved.

REWARD OF LOVE

8:13 The beloved continued the thoughts of the preceding words of the Shulamite. She was his vineyard.

8:14 The response to the voice of the beloved was that the Shulamite sought to consummate their marriage. This is the conclusion to true love that had faced strong trials. The song thus closes with a theme that true love may pass through many struggles, but it is discovered to be true and faithful when its outcome is in the marriage for life of those who have committed themselves to one another. Once two are married, however, there will continue to be struggles and possible outside attacks against their union. Two people must realize that the love they had for one another when they were first married will grow stronger. However, in order for it to grow stronger the two must work to develop their marriage in the Lord. If both are in the Lord, then they have a reason for which to live in harmony with one another, as well as a common ground on which to stand united in marriage.

Isaiah

WRITER

Isaiah was born somewhere between 760 and 780 B.C. He was a prophet of the southern kingdom of Israel, Judah. He was the son of Amoz. It is traditionally believed that Amoz was the brother of King Amaziah. It is true, then Isaiah was born into an aristocratic family, having access to the royal court throughout his life. We do know that his ministry was centered primarily in the city of Jerusalem, while he worked among those who were in power.

He was married and had two sons. The oldest was named Shearjashub, meaning, "a remnant will return" (7:3). The younger was named Mahershalalhashbaz, meaning, "hastening to the spoils" or "hurrying to the prey" (8:3,18). Both names were prophetic of the imminent plunder of both Damascus (Syria) and Samaria (Israel) by the Assyrians. We are not informed concerning the ministry of his wife, for Isaiah referred to her as "the prophetess" (8:3). Though she did not function as Isaiah in reference to prophecy concerning the nations, we would assume from her designation as a prophetess that she shared in teaching the people the will of God. We must keep in mind that it was the Holy Spirit who gave her this designation. Wives would be encouraged from this that they have an active role to play in being true partners with their husbands in the ministry of the word of God. Whatever the case in this situation, both husband and wife worked together in the ministry of teaching.

DATE

Isaiah's ministry of teaching (prophecy) began during the reign of Uzziah. He ministered throughout the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, who were kings of the southern kingdom. His life may have extended into the reign of Manasseh. However, it is possible that he was killed by Manasseh in the early part of Manasseh's reign (See 2 Kg 21:2-16). This would mean that Isaiah's prophetic ministry could have taken place between 740 and 700 B.C. Throughout this time, Isaiah wrote the material of this book, which later came together into one composition that we now have as the book of Isaiah.

BOOK

Micah was contemporary with the prophetic ministry of Isaiah. Micah ministered to the rural people of Judah. Isaiah may have also had contact with both Amos and Hosea, who were prophets to the northern kingdom, Israel. Because of the significant time in history during which Isaiah prophesied, he was the most influential prophet of Israel's history. He ministered at a time when Israel began reaping the final fruits that resulted from her desire to have a king rule over her. The kings led the northern kingdom into apostasy, and thus God's judgment came upon the north during Isaiah's ministry. Though Judah was allowed to continue for another one hundred years, God's judgment would eventually come on the south. Through these latter prophets, God worked to preserve His people in the promised land for as long as possible.

Isaiah's message was focused on the eternal God who was the creator of all things. Isaiah referred to God as the "Lord of armies," "the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity," "the Mighty One of Israel," and "the Maker." Throughout the book, God is referred to as "the Holy One of Israel" 33 times. Because the people of God refused to remain loyal to God as the only true and living God, they went into apostasy by creating religious beliefs and behavior after their own desires. Because of this, God stood innocent when it came to handing down judgment to an apostate people who had rejected His law.

After the judgment was handed down, and the people purged of rebellion in captivity, it was a time for restoration. This is the book of God's salvation. Though His people reaped the consequences of their unfaithfulness, God was always ready for their repentance. He thus brings salvation to His people (49:8; 59:16; 61:10; 63:5). The word "salvation," and its equivalent forms, are used 32 times throughout the book. Israel was saved from her captivities, but also from her sin. In reference to salvation from sin, God's salvation is offered to all men (46:13; 49:6; 52:10; 62:11). Through faith, man accepts His salvation (12:2; 33:2,6). Once known, His salvation is to be made known to all (12:2,3; 25:9; 60:18).

The historical message of salvation in reference to the remnant of Israel being restored to the land of promise after the captivity, therefore, is the metaphorical foundation for the spiritual salvation that would eventually come through the suffering Messiah. This book, therefore, is the Messianic book of the Old Testament. It is the message of the Christ who was to come for the salvation of all men, both for the Jews and for the Gentiles. The book of Isaiah is quoted 308 times in the New Testament, thus making Isaiah the most quoted prophet in the New Testament.

The apologetic nature of the book is profound. The details that are given in the book concerning the Christ set the stage for the remnant of Israel to identify the Messiah when He entered upon the world stage of history. Since the words of the prophet were written centuries before the coming of Jesus, we conclude that no one by chance could have fulfilled the many prophecies of Isaiah concerning the Messiah. If we had this book alone, we would conclude that Jesus was the Son of God. We would come to this conclusion because of the many prophecies in the book concerning the Suffering Savior that Jesus fulfilled in every detail.

Some writers have assumed that the book of Isaiah was actually written by at least three different writers. This assumption is based on the fact that the Hebrew text varies in literary style throughout the book. There are also variations in the message of the book, specifically the message that begins with chapter 40. It is thus assumed that the book was actually the result of a compilation of many different writings by different authors. It is assumed that these writings were eventually brought together after the Babylonian captivity into one book that we call Isaiah.

The argument that Isaiah is a compilation of several authors is weak for several reasons. The complete text of Isaiah that was discovered in 1947 with the Dead Sea Scrolls that date around 150 B.C., shows no division between chapters 39 and 40. The view that the book was composed by different authors does not recognize the nature by which the Holy Spirit guided the hand of those writers He used to write sacred literature. The Spirit allowed the writers to use their own vocabulary and writing styles, with unique references to the cultural background of each writer. Since the ministry of Isaiah extended over a period of at least fifty years, we would assume that he would change in his use of words, as well as in his style of writing. As historical events changed, we would assume that Isaiah would adapt the nature of his style of writing to the historical context in which he ministered. We would not assume that Isaiah wrote the entire book in one setting, but over a lifetime of ministry. Every writer knows that one's writing style and message

change. Isaiah's writing style and message changed throughout the years as the circumstances surrounding Israel and Judah changed. The book may have been a compilation of writings, but they were all writings of the prophet, Isaiah.

If one denies Isaiah's writing of the entire book, then he must answer the fact that the entire book is credited to Isaiah in 1:1. Throughout the book, the writer manifests familiarity with Jerusalem and its environment before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. (See 62:6). No part of the book was written as if the writer was far away from Jerusalem. Consider also the fact that the New Testament gives credit to Isaiah alone for writing the book as it was in the hands of the 1st century Christians (See Mt 12:17-21; Jn 12:38-41; Rm 10:16,20,21). We conclude that there was only one writer for the book.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The book of Isaiah covers one of the most significant periods of history in reference to the final years of the northern kingdom of Israel before it went into Assyrian captivity. The historical record of Isaiah's ministry is recorded in 2 Kings 15–20 and 2 Chronicles 26–32. It was an era of world events in history in which the people of God were not unaffected because of their apostasy and alliances with other nations. The Mycenaean age of Greece was coming to a close with the formation of the Greek city-states. Shortly after Isaiah's birth, the city of Rome was founded. The predominant world empire of Assyria was growing and would become God's proxy judgment nation to take the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity. In the early years of Isaiah's ministry, the 23rd dynasty was in power in Egypt. Before his death, the 24th and 25th dynasties of Egypt came into power. About 25 years after Isaiah was born, the northern kingdom would go into Assyrian captivity. His ministry would extend through the reigns in the southern kingdom of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. It is speculated that Isaiah met his death at the hands of Manasseh, the reigning son of Hezekiah.

The rise of the Assyrian Empire stirred historical events that greatly affected the Israelites. As the Assyrian Empire grew, it focused on claiming territory east of its capital, Nineveh. Syria was subdued by the Assyrians and subjected to tribute. However, Rezin, king of Syria, recruited Pekah, king of the northern kingdom of Israel. These two kings then sought support from Ahaz, king of Judah, in order to make their stand against the Assyrians. However, Ahaz refused, and thus aroused the wrath of Rezin and Pekah, who thought to dethrone Ahaz and place the son of Tabeel on the throne of David in Jerusalem (7:6; 2 Kg 16:5). What followed was the Syro-Ephraimitic War that occurred in 734 B.C.

Hezekiah followed Ahaz as king of Judah. He was a righteous king who carried out many reforms in Judah, specifically in cutting down the Asherah groves of idolatrous worship and removing the high places (2 Kg 18:4,22). He reinstituted the Passover (2 Ch 30:1), and called on all Judah to return to true worship of God.

Sargon II, king of Assyria, carried away the northern kingdom, Israel, into captivity in 722/21 B.C. As a policy to destroy nationhood, the Assyrians displaced people they had conquered and scattered them throughout their kingdom. They thus scattered thousands of Jews throughout the Assyrian Empire, and then brought peoples from other conquered nations into the northern territory of Palestine (2 Kg 17:6,24). These resettled people in Palestine would later develop the Samaritan race.

After the northern kingdom was taken into Assyrian captivity, the Assyrians, through the leadership of King Sennacherib, later captured 46 fortified cities of Israel and took 200,150 Israelites into captivity. Sennacherib came even to the walls of Jerusalem, but the Angel of God raised His hand against his army, killing in one night 185,000 of his army (2 Kg 18:13 – 19:36).

GOD'S PROPHECY OF THE NATIONS

	Amos	Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel	Others
Babylon		13:1 – 14:23	50 – 51		Habakkuk 2:6-17
Philistia	1:6-8	14:29-32	47	25:15-17	
Moab	2:1-3	15 – 16	48	25:8-11	
Damascus	1:11,12	17:1-3	49:23-27		
Egypt		19	46:1-26	29 – 32	
Edom	1:9,10	21:11,12	49:7-22	25:12-14	Obadiah
Tyre	1:13-15	23		26 – 28	
Ammon			49:1-6	25:1-7	
Nineveh					Nahum

Prophecies Concerning Judah & Israel
(1:1 – 12:16)

Outline: (1) Introduction (1:1), (2) Religiosity does not hide rebellion (1:2-31), (3) Chastisement brings a future (2:1 – 4:6), (4) God's judgment on wicked people (5:1-30), (5) Isaiah's calling (6:1-13), (6) Hope in the coming Messiah (7:1 – 9:7), (7) The doom of Samaria (9:8 – 10:4), (8) The doom of Assyria (10:5-34), (9) Gathering of the remnant (11:1 – 12:6)

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1:1 ***Vision:*** Most of what Isaiah recorded came to him through visions from God and were recorded through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Since he recorded many historical events, we would conclude that these events were recorded by inspiration in order to be accurate in every detail (See 1 Sm 9:9; 2 Ch 32:32). ***Judah:*** The name "Judah" at this time in history referred to the southern kingdom. The name "Israel" is used throughout the book to refer to the northern kingdom.

RELIGIOSITY DOES NOT HIDE REBELLION

1:2-4 God calls on the heavens and earth to witness the apostasy of His people (Dt 30:19; 32:1; Ps 50:1-6; Mc 1:1; 6:1-2). ***Ox ... donkey:*** The animals know their master, but Israel had forgotten who created the nation by bringing it into existence when the Israelites came out of the bondage of Egypt. Israel would not exist as a nation if it had not been for the direct hand of God in delivering them from Egyptian bondage.

1:5-9 ***Sinful nation:*** Society had become corrupt. The people had turned from being a society that was guided by the law of God, to a society that was guided by the moral lawlessness of their fathers. Throughout the generations, they had allowed the unrighteous behavior of the fathers to be passed from one generation to another. When Isaiah came to the nation as the voice of God, it was too late to repent. They were destined for captivity. ***Wounds and bruises:*** They had been disciplined by God so much in the past that their entire body was covered with scars. They were at a time in their history where the chastisement of the Lord would not cause them to repent. They were hardened to the discipline of the Lord. They no longer recognized that their hard times were actually the chastening of the Lord. And because they were hardened, they would not repent. There comes a time in the history of a nation that the culture becomes so sinful, that the culture as a whole cannot turn back to God. ***Your cities are burned:*** It is significant to understand that the past tense is often used by Isaiah to refer to the certainty of God's judgment in the future. The judgment is given as if it had already happened. God's prophet thus writes concerning the future as if it had already taken place. The picture of desolation here was yet to happen, but the people needed to know that its occurrence was certain. When God speaks in prophecy, it is as if the fulfillment has already happened.

1:10-17 ***Word ... law:*** The leaders of Judah had done the same as the leaders of Sodom and Gomorrah. They had forsaken the law of God. ***You rulers:*** When the leaders rebel against God, they lead the people away from God (See comments Js 3:1). ***Full of burnt offerings:*** They were involved in sacrilege concerning those things that God required in the law. They were ceremonially keeping the law, but their hearts were far from God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). They forsook the weightier matters of the law (See comments Mt 23:1-33). ***Tread My courts:*** One can walk on the grounds of the temple, but his offerings are useless if not given out of a sincere heart. ***Vain offerings:*** Their worship was vain because it came from insincere hearts. One cannot live in iniquity, and yet be a part of a solemn assembly that is dedicated to the worship of God. Their lives were not given in worship of God, and thus their assemblies to carry out the sacrifices were useless. One can approach God in an acceptable manner only when his life reflects godly living. ***Appointed feasts:*** The law of God required their coming before Him in order to offer sacrifices. However, they could justly come before Him only when they lived according to His law. In order for their sacrifices to be acceptable, they had to repent. ***Spread forth your hands:*** If one lifts up holy hands to God in worship, he must be sure that his life is holy (See Ps 24:3,4; see comments 1 Tm 2:8). ***Seek justice:*** God's people must be known for being just and the defenders of those who are oppressed.

1:18-20 The plea was for repentance. God's forgiveness was conditioned on their repentance. ***Scarlet ... crimson:*** This was the color of the robes that were worn by royalty. God's call includes a promise of forgiveness and cleansing (Compare Rv 3:4,5; 7:14). In the historical context, their repentance and forgiveness included more than repentance of the sin that was in their lives. Their continued existence in the land as a nation depended on their repentance as a nation. However, they did not repent. As a result, the sword of God's judgment through the Assyrians and Babylonians came upon them because they sought to live as a rebellious nation.

1:21-23 Isaiah expressed amazement at the fact that a nation that was miraculously born out of Egyptian captivity by the power of God could turn from God to follow after gods the people had created after their own imagination. The leadership of the nation was responsible for such an apostasy. Isaiah thus focused on the leadership of Jerusalem in taking the nation to the harlotry bed of pagan nations. The city had become corrupt. Society was unjust to the point of oppressing widows and orphans. They were corrupt in their business practices in that they mixed pure silver with other metals in order to profit from dishonest trade. Their wine was diluted. Leaders who had partnered with thieves and unrighteousness ruled from palaces. Leaders would not perform their responsibilities without someone giving them a bribe. Because the poor could not pay the bribes, they received no justice.

1:24-26 God would bring vengeance upon Jerusalem for her apostasy from the law of God. But with the punishment of vengeance there would come salvation for a remnant of faithful people. Among the majority who were apostates, there was a faithful minority. But when God's chastisement of the nation came through captivity, the faithful minority had to pay the price for the apostate majority. ***Dross:*** When the dross was taken from the molten metal, only the pure remained.

God would wipe His disciplining hand over Jerusalem and remove all the dross of sin. What would be left would be pure, the minority who were faithful.

1:27-31 Though their sin brought destruction, their destruction (chastisement) revealed a remnant. The consuming fire of the Lord was unleashed on them for their own salvation as a remnant nation (See Hb 12:29). They had to be refined with the consuming fire of the Lord in order to recognize the deplorable state of sin into which they had fallen. ***Oak whose leaf fades:*** Sin had brought them to a spiritual drought, which drought made them as dry leaves ready to be sparked into a fire. When one becomes spiritually dry, he will be burned with the discipline of the Lord in order that repentance might be encouraged. For this reason, therefore, we do not despise the disciplining of the Lord.

Chapter 2
CHASTISEMENT BRINGS A FUTURE

2:1-4 This is a very significant prophecy in reference to the present reign of Jesus over all things. The prophecies of Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-3 are parallel. Both prophets discussed the same future events. Isaiah and Micah foretold the coming response to the future kingdom reign of Jesus. They discussed the effect the kingdom reign of God would have on men throughout the world (See comments chs 65 & 66). ***Last days:*** Isaiah affirmed that the events of this prophecy would occur in the last days. In view of the fact that the fulfillment of this prophecy took place in the days of the Roman kings, we must conclude that reference here was to the last days of national Israel. These days were in the days of the Roman kings. Reference was not to the "church age," or to a brief time before the final coming of Jesus. The last days were in existence at the time the prophecy was fulfilled (See comments At 2:16,17). ***Mountain of the Lord's house:*** The passage does not say that the Lord's house is that which would be established. Isaiah stated that the "mountain" of the Lord's house would be firmly established above every power. "Mountain" is metaphorical for the reign of the Lord that would be established above all kingdoms of this world. "Established" is a word depicting the idea that the Lord's reign would be firmly implanted in the hearts of man. "House" is a metaphor taken from the tabernacle, which to the Jews, was a symbol of God's presence in Israel. However, the house to come about which Isaiah spoke was not a physical structure. It would be spiritual in nature (Lk 17:20,21). Isaiah was using the word "house" as a metaphor to indicate that the presence of God would be among or in His people as the Jews understood His presence in Israel as symbolized by the tabernacle, and later, the temple in Jerusalem. ***All nations:*** The Lord's house would not be composed of a single nation as in the Old Testament. It would go beyond the nation of Israel. Peoples from all nations of the world would come into its shelter because of the strength of the mountain. This was a prophecy of the evangelistic nature of the people who would be of the house of God to come. People from all nations would come into the house of God because people of the house of God would go into all nations. ***Flow to it:*** The result of the establishment of the mountain (kingdom reign) would be that people from all nations would flow unto it. Men and women would respond to the kingdom reign of the Lord that would be established far above all kings and kingdoms of this world. It would not be a physical kingdom as a kingdom of this world. It would be a spiritual kingdom (Lk 17:20,21). ***Let us go up to the mountain:*** The prophecy places the one who makes the invitation to go to Jerusalem, outside Jerusalem. This is a statement that would be made from those Jews who were scattered throughout the world who had made trips to Jerusalem after the events of Acts 2. Announcements would be made throughout the world to go to Jerusalem in order to be instructed in the word of God. ***Word would go from Jerusalem:*** With the nation of Israel, the law originated at Mount Sinai. In the future, however, the word would initially begin at and go from the city of Jerusalem in Palestine. Again, this is a picture of the evangelistic nature of the new order that was to come. The word of God would be spread abroad to all nations. It would not be confined to one nation as Israel. It would not be confined to one culture of people. It would originate with the Jews, but it would go into all the world and to all nations (Mt 28:19,20). ***Judge among the nations:*** God would send judgment among the nations by the preaching of His word. The judgment would come by the authority of the word. When men either accepted or rejected the preached word of Jesus, they would judge themselves (Jn 12:48). ***Beat their swords into plowshares:*** The people who would come unto the mountain, and thus, into the shelter of the house of God, would come for peace, not war. It would be there that they enjoy the brotherhood of mankind. They would enjoy peace because in God's house there would be no distinctions made in reference to nationality. In Israel, nationhood gave rise to physical conflict. However, in the new order, brotherhood would give rise to peace and harmony among men. Men would not seek to learn how to destroy their brothers, but learn to have peace on earth among men. The prophecy of verses 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-3 were fulfilled in the 1st century. Hebrews 1:1,2 states that God spoke to the fathers before the coming of Jesus through the prophets. However, He *"has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ..."* (Hb 1:2). When the Hebrew writer wrote these words he was in the last days of national Israel. When Peter quoted Joel 2:28 in Acts 2:16,17, he said, *"But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it will come to pass in the last days ...."* Therefore, the last days of Israel were in existence when God poured out the Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. The phrase "last days" in the context of Acts 2 does not refer to the time of the "church age," that is, an age that began with the establishment of the church in A.D. 30 and will extend to the end of time. The statement emphasizes the fact that the last days were in existence at the time the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Joel had said that in the last days God would pour out the Spirit. Therefore, Peter and the earthly disciples were in the last days of national Israel at the time the Spirit was poured out. If we say that the phrase "last days" refers to the entire church age, then we would have the church in existence before it began in Acts 2. The government of national Israel was finally destroyed in A.D. 70. Hebrews 1:1,2 was

written before this date. The Hebrew writer stated, *"God ... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ...."* Therefore, God was speaking to men through Jesus during Jesus' personal ministry. He was speaking through Jesus before Jesus' death on the cross. He continued to speak by inspiration through the apostles and prophets after Jesus' death and before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Though God continues to speak today through the inspired written word, this does not mean that Hebrews 1:1,2 refers exclusively to these times, though this is the last dispensation of God's work on earth. Acts 2:16,17 refers to the last days of national Israel in which God poured out the Spirit and in which Jesus spoke to humanity. Jesus continues to speak today through His written word. But it was in the last days of national Israel, and before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, that Jews were calling upon one another to go to Jerusalem to hear the word of the Lord that was preached by the apostles who stayed in Jerusalem for at least fifteen years after the establishment of the church. ***House of the God of Jacob:*** In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said during His earthly ministry that His church was yet in the future. However, in Acts 2:47 men and women were added to those who had submitted to the sovereignty of Jesus. In Acts 5:11 the church of the submitted is stated as being in existence. The church, therefore, was established sometime after Matthew 16:18 and before Acts 5:11. Between Matthew 16 and Acts 5 Jesus ascended to the right hand of God (Ep 1:20-22). He was given dominion, glory and sovereignty (Dn 7:13,14). He now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). To this "mountain" of the Lord's sovereignty men and women of all nations have responded. They have responded in obedience to the gospel, and thus have become the spiritual house of God. Paul linked the phrase "house of God" with the "church of the living God" in 1 Timothy 3:15. Since the church is composed of people who have responded to the kingship of Jesus, we must affirm, therefore, that the church began when people first submitted to the kingship of Jesus. Jesus ascended to the throne of David about seven days before Acts 2. Peter announced the ascension and reign in Acts 2. People heard the message and were obedient to Jesus' sovereignty (At 2:41). Therefore, the church began when people first submitted to the sovereign reign of Jesus. On the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, about 3,000 people first submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus. It was at this time, therefore, that the church was established. ***Go and say:*** Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the gospel to the world (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15). He died for the sins of the world. Therefore, His plea is *"whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (Jn 3:16). All men are invited to come to the mountain of God's sovereignty. God is *"not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pt 3:9). Obedient believers from all nations of the world flow to the mountain of God's sovereignty, and thus are obedient to the good news of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection (See comments Rm 6:3-6). This was the fulfillment of the prophecies of both Isaiah and Micah. ***The word of the Lord from Jerusalem:*** Jesus told His apostles in Luke 24:47 that the message of the gospel should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. In Acts 1:8 He stated that the apostles would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, unto Samaria, and to the end of the earth. ***He will judge among the nations:*** In John 12:48 Jesus said that people will judge themselves by their rejection of His word. One brings the judgment of Jesus upon himself according to his reaction to the word of Jesus (See Jn 9:39). When one hears the word and rejects it, he judges himself, for it is the word of Jesus that will judge him in the last day. This is why Paul stated that some Jews judged themselves unworthy of eternal life because they rejected the message of His preaching (At 13:46). God judges among the nations today through the authoritative word of His Son (See Hb 1:1,2). He will judge the world at the final judgment through Jesus and His word (At 17:31; Rm 2:16). ***Swords into plowshares:*** As opposed to physical warfare throughout the history of Israel, in the kingdom of Jesus there would be no physical warfare among men. In the kingdom, Jesus brings peace among races (Ep 2:14). In the church, Jesus gives peace of mind (Jn 14:27; see Is 16:33; Rm 5:1; Ph 4:7; Cl 1:20; 3:15). In every sense of the word peace, therefore, Jesus is what Paul said of Him in 2 Thessalonians 3:16, *"Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way."*

2:5-9 Because they had rebelled against the will of the Lord, Israel was walking in darkness. The evidence of their degradation was selfishness. They did not look to the needs of others, but each one to his own needs. ***Influences:*** Instead of keeping themselves as a unique nation by maintaining a separation from the nations around them, they adopted the ways of the nations who were without God. They engaged in trading contracts and covenants with foreign nations. They allowed the religious beliefs of those with whom they came into union to change their faith. Pagan rites and rituals characterized their religious behavior at the time Isaiah wrote. ***Work of their own hands:*** When a religious person desires to live according to his own wishes, he creates a god after his own imagination. His god is created in order to soothe his own conscience. In order to remember this god, the idolater forms a representation of his god in either stone, wood or clay. In this context, we must not forget that their treasures of gold and silver were formed into idols. There were no banks, and thus one's personal treasury was made into a unique idol for each household. In this case, therefore, their idolatry was not only in reference to foreign religions, but worship of their financial wealth (Cl 3:5). They worshiped their great treasures. Both the common man and the rich man participated in this religious/economic culture of materialism.

2:10-22 ***Day of the Lord:*** This was a day of judgment. It was judgment in time on the arrogance and materialism of a nation that had forsaken God. The day would come, however, when the idolaters would hide themselves from the terror of the Lord. In terror, they would seek to hide themselves in caves and caverns. When God is exalted, men are humiliated. Though one would be proud as the cedars of Lebanon, and strong as the oaks of Bashan, in terror he will seek refuge from the judgment of God. All the accomplishments of Judah would eventually be smashed by God because they had

forsaken Him (See Jl 3:16; Hg 2:6; compare Hb 12:26; Rv 6:15,16; 18:11-19). ***Cast away ... idols:*** The gold and silver will mean nothing when one is running for his life from the armies of either Assyria or Babylon. The idols will be powerless in the face of those who would eventually take the Israelites into captivity. However, it would only be then that they would realize the futility of all their wealth.

Chapter 3

3:1-9 The warning is that God is about to remove Judah's supplies and sustenance. God chided them concerning their rulers among them who failed to deliver them. He would replace them with children and babes, or those who behaved as mischievous children and insolent novices. Because of the lack of spiritual and moral leadership by the leaders, the people were oppressed and exploited. The social situation was so deplorable that any man with any means was asked to be a ruler over the people. ***Bread:*** If the bread was taken away, the life of the people was taken away. ***Supply of water:*** They could not trust in their supply of water that came into the walls of Jerusalem through the conduit that Hezekiah built. ***Evil upon themselves:*** When they suffered the judgment of God, they would realize that they brought their calamity upon themselves. If anyone sought to blame God, then they must face God through the pronouncements of His law. And in these pronouncements were judgments, if they forsook His law.

3:10-12 ***Cause you to err:*** See comments Js 3:1. Their leaders led them into apostasy because they did not stand up for that which was right. However, the people were guilty because they were willing to be led by unrighteous leadership. God would judge the leaders, but the people were individually accountable for themselves.

3:13-15 The rulers had reigned with little concern for the poor. They ruled for their own sake, and not for the sake of the people. Any ruler who seeks to dominate the people for his own benefit, stands under the judgment of God. If Israel would have maintained God's laws concerning the poor, there would have been no poor in the agricultural community throughout the land.

3:16-26 God will disgrace the proud women of Jerusalem. He will bring shame on these haughty ladies who paraded themselves before men in order to draw attention to themselves. All their treasured ornaments that they wore in order to enhance their beauty would be stripped from them. Such outward appearances were repulsive to God because they were worn by wanton women who were arrogant with their riches. All those things with which they dressed themselves would be traded for the rags of a captive. The war to come would claim the lives of all the mighty warriors, and lead to the decimation of males to the point that seven women would seek to find one available man to marry (4:1).

Chapter 4

4:1-6 ***Branch of the Lord:*** The Branch would be the founder of a new era for Israel. Isaiah speaks of the returned remnant that will have been purged of sin, and then brought back into the land of promise. In contrast to the social environment of the old Jerusalem that was explained in chapter 3, this new Jerusalem would be the redeemed from captivity (Compare Ps 15 & 24). Though the historical application is in reference to the remnant that would return from captivity, we would also see in these words the coming of the Messiah, the Branch, and the sanctification of God's people who are now the church, the new Jerusalem (See 1 Co 1:2; 2 Co 1:1). ***Spirit of judgment:*** "Spirit" is from the Hebrew word that also means "breath." It was God's breath of judgment that purged them of sin. ***Cloud ... flaming fire:*** This is a metaphorical reference to the Shekinah that led Israel throughout the wilderness wanderings after they came out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 13:21; Nm 9:15; 10:34). God would manifest His presence among the repentant and cleanse the people of the new Jerusalem. ***Tabernacle:*** Or, tent. The tent of God would stretch over His people for protection. His atoning grace would be a place of refuge for those who were weary of their sins. When we submit to the will of God, God goes to work for us, both spiritually and physically.

Chapter 5

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON WICKED PEOPLE

5:1-7 This is the song of the vineyard, a portrayal of God's planting of Israel as a vineyard in the land of promise (Compare Ps 80:8-13; Mt 21:33-46). ***Beloved:*** It was the God of love who planted Israel on a fruitful hill. The soil was fertile, and thus should have brought forth what was expected. The field was Palestine, the central trading route between the northern countries of the ancient world, and all of Africa to the south. It was a location where passing traders could be taught of God by the rural farmers of Israel. However, they failed to assume this responsibility. ***Fenced:*** God protected His people. ***Stones:*** The Canaanite nations were extracted, at least most of them. ***He expected:*** Everything was done in order that faithfulness be produced and God's name glorified. ***Wild grapes:*** The fruit of iniquity was a small, sour and hard grape that was useless for producing wine. Israel was planted with all the advantages, but produced wild and useless grapes. She was now useless for bringing glory to God. ***O inhabitants of Jerusalem:*** God asked Israel to judge themselves. He knew that they would pronounce the right judgment upon themselves. They knew their apostasy, but were too far gone at the time of Isaiah to turn back. Their existing culture had fallen from the righteousness of God, and thus they could not turn back. Though they knew the meaning of the song of the vineyard, they would still go into captivity because of their apostate culture. It is impossible for entire cultures to make paradigm shifts to righteousness when they are satisfied with where they are. Godless cultures have no moral conscience that will lead them back to God. In the case of Israel, God took away all His protection and handed them over to the invading armies of Assyria and Babylon. ***Hedge:*** He took away His blessing and protection. ***Wall:*** He allowed foreign nations to enter Palestine. ***Waste:*** Their farms were laid waste when thousands of Israelites were taken into captivity.

5:8-10 ***House to house:*** Greed drove the rich to consume the land by buying out neighbors. Farms became so large that

a poor class was developed in Palestine during Isaiah's time. But such was contrary to the law of God (See Nm 27:1-11; 33:54; 1 Kg 21:3,4). They crowded out small farmers who were driven to the cities as the poor. Large land owners made no room for the poor to glean from the leftovers. ***Houses will be desolate:*** The punishment for greed would come when the invading armies of Assyria and Babylon would empty their houses of all their treasured goods. ***One bath:*** Though ten acres could produce thousands of gallons of grape juice, it would produce only one bath (8 gallons).

5:11-12 The wealthy of society became indifferent to the work of God through Israel. They consumed their time in drunken parties, unaware of the impending danger that was looming in the near future. Their wealth had introverted their behavior to think only of themselves. They were spiritually insensitive as they lived in a world of luxury they thought would never end.

5:13-17 The result of their material life-style was their indifference toward the work of God. Because of their indifference, they could not perceive that their nobles would die as a result of the judgment of God. The common people would be consumed with thirst. ***Sheol:*** The grave would be filled with the dead to the point that the dead could not be numbered. ***Foreigners:*** They would be extracted from their farmlands and taken into captivity. The traveling nomads would eat the fruit of their labors from their farms.

5:18,19 ***Cords ... cart ropes:*** What started out as supposedly insignificant violations of the law had grown into cultural values that directed the behavior of society. Common individual sins became cultural norms by which society conducted itself. They arrogantly and ignorantly hasten the work of God to bring judgment upon them. But what they thought would be a glorious future by the work of God, was to be national calamity. What they thought would be God's good work in their lives was actually God working to bring His judgment upon them.

5:20-23 Their cultural norms that should have been based on the word of God, were now based on a perversion of righteousness. It was not like it was during the days of the judges when individuals and individual tribes sinned, and then could repent, for they knew the law to which they could repent. They were now a generation that could not nationally return to God, for their moral norms were so twisted that they could not return to the law of God. ***Wise in their own eyes:*** They had become a law unto themselves, and thus rejected the law of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). When societies create their own moral codes, they will reject the law of God. ***Men of strength:*** They took pride in being able to drink much. ***Justify the wicked:*** Drunken judges are a disgrace to society. They pervert justice because they are perverted in their thinking. Much strong drink had intoxicated their thinking.

5:24,25 ***Fire ... consumes:*** God's judgment on them would send thousands to death. They were corrupt to the root, and thus brought forth blossoms of iniquity. Their selfish prosperity manifested the depth of their iniquity. The reason the sinful culture went so deep was that they had rejected the law of God (Hs 4:6; compare Mk 7:9). ***His anger:*** See 9:12,17,21; 10:4; 23:11.

5:26-30 ***Nations ... will come:*** If the northern kingdom would have known what these verses truly meant, they would surely have repented. But here God summoned the Assyrian Empire as His proxy judgment upon His vineyard that had gone wrong. He throws up the ensign in order that the army assemble for war against His people. The Assyrian army would come with swiftness, fully prepared to carry out God's judgment on an apostate nation. Their warrior culture would move them to totally consume the northern kingdom. When God makes such a pronouncement against a nation, even if the nation were His chosen people, only doom awaits.

Chapter 6
ISAIAH'S CALLING

6:1-5 ***King Uzziah:*** During the last twenty years of Uzziah's life, Isaiah ministered as a prophet in Judah. Because of Uzziah's presumptuous behavior in reference to the temple, he was cursed with leprosy (2 Ch 26:16-21). His son, Jotham, reigned as a coregent king in the absence of his father. It was during this time of national uncertainty that Isaiah was reaffirmed as a prophet of God with the vision that is explained in this chapter. Israel's king had died, but the true King of Israel was still reigning in heaven, exalted and glorified. ***Seraphim:*** Or, "the burning ones." ***The whole earth:*** See Ps 8 & 19. ***My eyes have seen the King:*** Other than seeing the Lord, the One Isaiah saw in this vision is not specified. He was not identified specifically until John wrote centuries later concerning Jesus, *"These things Isaiah said because he saw His [Jesus'] glory and spoke of Him"* (Jn 12:41). ***I am undone:*** This is what we would expect of mortal man in the presence of a divine manifestation of God (Ex 33:20). The closer one comes to realizing the presence of God, the more he is humbled in worship. When one is in the presence of a manifestation of God, he realizes his frailty and insignificant being. Because of his fallibility, Isaiah confessed his unworthiness. Man's lips, that often betray hidden fractures in the human heart, are unworthy to give praise in the presence of divinity (Js 3:2). Because God keeps His presence just beyond the realm of our sense perceptions, are we able to voice our praise of Him. If He manifested Himself directly to us, we would be undone as Isaiah, and thus would be speechless.

6:6,7 The hot coal was taken from the altar upon which the sin offering was made for the nation (Lv 17:11). The seraphim touched the coal to the part of man that reveals so much sin. In this case, it cleansed Isaiah of sin in order that his lips be used to minister God's word to the people. His mouth and heart were thus cleansed of iniquity and sin in order that he assume his destiny for God.

6:8 ***Here am I. Send me:*** God knows the hearts of those who will answer His call to preach to His people. He knew the heart of Isaiah. He knew that Isaiah would respond to this vision in the manner that is herein revealed. In this case, Isaiah was privileged to see a manifestation of the presence of the Lord. He thus responded to be the Lord's ambassador. It would be many centuries later when the Lord Jesus would set foot on this earth and again motivate men to go into all the world (See comments Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16).

6:9,10 Isaiah would never be able to feel that his preaching was successful. He was commissioned to a spiritually insensitive people, a people who were dull of hearing. They were dull of hearing because they had no interest in hearing the word of God preached. They had no concern for what God had to say in reference to their behavior. He would suffer severely because of what he would say to the people. These words indicate a mission of failure if one considers responses to one's message a measure of success.

6:11-13 ***Lord, how long:*** Because of the futility of the mission, Isaiah voiced his frustration. But this would enter into the realm of God's foreknowledge. Isaiah would experience the fall of the northern kingdom, but not the fall of Judah. He saw what was happening in the north, and thus was given a visual illustration of what would happen in Judah. Through mass deportations by the Assyrians and Babylonians, Palestine would essentially be emptied of inhabitants. The land would be laid waste and houses emptied. ***The holy seed is its stock:*** The desolation would be almost complete. But out of the stump, the seedline promise given to Abraham, there would continue the Davidic seedline (Gn 12:1-3). The remnant would emerge and remain. From the remnant that would remain, One would come forth who would be a blessing to all mankind.

Chapter 7
HOPE IN THE COMING MESSIAH

7:1-9 The Syro-Ephraimitic War took place in 734 B.C., about 12 years before the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered and taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. This message came in the last days of the existing northern kingdom of Israel. The southern kingdom, Judah, would be spared until its final fall in 586 B.C. when it would eventually be taken into Babylonian captivity. The Assyrian Empire, under the reign of Tiglath-pileser, was expanding to the north of Palestine. Both Syria (with its capital, Damascus, and reigning king, Rezin) and Israel (the northern kingdom referred to as Israel, with its reigning king, Pekah, in its capital, Samaria), formed an alliance against the Assyrians. In order to enhance their efforts against Assyria, they proposed to subject their foe to the south, Judah, with its king, Ahaz. Since Hoshea, the last king of Israel, assassinated his predecessor in the 12th year of Jotham, Ahaz was actually reigning coregently with his father, Jotham (See 2 Kg 15:30). In order to defend Judah, Ahaz sent to Tiglath-pileser a plea to help him against the threat of the alliance between Syria and Israel. Tiglath-pileser answered the appeal, and thus conquered the two enemies of Judah. This move by Ahaz angered God, and thus Isaiah was given the following messages with which to confront Ahaz. Because of his lack of faith in God to protect Judah, the Assyrians would plunder the countryside of Judah, raping the land of its productivity. The land would revert to open pasture lands where roaming livestock would feed. ***Rezin ... Pekah:*** At this time in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, the people had fallen so far away from God that they made an alliance with Syria in order to make war against their fellow Jews to the south in Judah. ***Conduit of the upper pool:*** Ahaz began a tunnel project to bring water from a pool outside Jerusalem into the city. The project was later completed by Hezekiah (22:9,11; 2 Kg 18:17; 2 Ch 32:3,4,30). ***Take heed and be quiet:*** It was a time to remain calm. Ahaz was around thirty years old, and Isaiah was not much older than twenty. It was a time, therefore, that both prophet and king had to remain calm in the face of an allegiance of two nations that sought to conquer Jerusalem. ***65 years:*** This would be the time in the future when Assyria would conquer the nations of both Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel. ***If you will not believe:*** This was an opportunity for God to call on Ahaz to believe what He was saying through His prophet, Isaiah. If he did not believe, he would be taken out.

7:10-17 Since Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, Isaiah gave his own sign. ***Depth ... height:*** This is possibly from Sheol to heaven, though some suggest that reference is from the earth to heaven. ***I will not ask:*** Ahaz probably did not want to commit himself to God's plans. If he asked for the sign, and it was given, then he would have to commit himself to follow God's course of action (Compare Ex 17:2; Dt 6:16). If Isaiah made the request, then Ahaz could say that it was Isaiah's scheme. It seems that at this time Ahaz had already determined to make an alliance with Assyria in order to resist the attack of Rezin and Pekah. He was determined to trust in Assyria and not God. ***A virgin will conceive:*** The immediate context of this statement is that a young woman would conceive, and then bear a son. Before this baby passed through its younger years, the nations of Syria and the northern kingdom, Israel, would have gone into captivity by the hands of the Assyrians. ***Virgin:*** The Septuagint, which was a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, used the Greek word "virgin" in this verse to translate the Hebrew word *almah*, meaning a young maiden of marriageable age. The Hebrew word *bethulah*, which specifically means a virgin, is not used. The reason it is not used was for the purpose of making this prophecy two fold. The Holy Spirit sanctioned the Septuagint translation by Matthew's quotation of the verse in reference to Jesus in Matthew 1:22,23. Because the prophecy was quoted in reference to Jesus, then we would conclude that there was a double prophecy made by Isaiah. The first fulfillment was in reference to Isaiah's immediate historical context, and the second was in reference to the Messiah, Jesus, who was born of a virgin. The difference between the two births, therefore, was that the child that was born in Isaiah's time was not of a virgin birth, but Jesus' birth was of the virgin Mary. ***Immanuel:*** Or, "God with us." ***Know to refuse evil and choose good:*** This would be before the child was of the age where he would be accountable for his decisions in reference to right and wrong.

7:18-25 ***Fly ... bee:*** The Egyptian gadfly and the Assyrian bumblebee would infest the hills and valleys of Judah. ***Razor:*** As the hired barber would shave clean the head and beard of a man, so would the Assyrian army shave through the kingdoms to the north in order to clean the earth of them. The Assyrians would also shave Judah of her fields and productivity outside the walls of Jerusalem. People would have to live on subsistence diets in order to survive. The land would be deserted, and thus cultivation would cease. The land would go back to

the wild where wild animals would roam. Because the inhabitants would flee from the land, unattended livestock would wander throughout the land. The invading Assyrians would take the northern kingdom into captivity, but the devastation of Judah would be a warning to the southern kingdom that they should repent and return to God. Judah would suffer the consequences of Ahaz's decision to trust in the Assyrians and not in God.

Chapter 8

8:1-4 Mahershalalhashbaz: Some translations place the meaning of this name in the text of verse 1, with the name being stated in verse 2. The meaning of the name was prophetic, meaning, "speed to the spoil," or "hasten to the booty." The child's name would be prophetic of the downfall of Syria and Samaria to the Assyrians. The plundering would reach even to the walls of Jerusalem. Two witnesses were to verify the prophecy with their signatures. ***Uriah:*** This was possibly the high priest (2 Kg 16:10-16). He would have been a witness who was more in agreement with Ahaz. ***Zechariah:*** This was possibly the father of Ahaz's wife (2 Kg 18:2; 2 Ch 29:1). This witness, also, would not be in favor of Isaiah's prophecy. But they had to give their witness to the prophecy, and thus would be forced to confess to the accuracy of its fulfillment. ***Prophetess:*** Isaiah's wife. ***Damascus ... Samaria:*** These two capitals represented their nations. Before the child of the prophet and prophetess could speak, Assyria, through its king, Tiglath-pileser, would ravage both Syria and Israel.

8:5-10 Because of Ahaz's trust in Assyria, and not God, Judah would pay the price for his faithlessness. Assyria would come from her home on the Euphrates River, pass through Syria and Israel, and then overflow into the land of Judah. ***Shiloah:*** This was a large spring of water southeast of the main city of Jerusalem. Instead of trusting in the gentle peace and security that comes from God, Ahaz and Judah would experience a flood of the Assyrians who would devastate the land. ***Gird:*** All those who would put on their armor and swords would be overcome by the invading Assyrians. ***Counsel together:*** Even if countries would make alliances in order to muster their armies against the strength of the Assyrian army, they would be conquered. God was using the Assyrian army as His proxy judgment on both Syria and Israel. No army, therefore, could stand against His plan to judge these two nations, and finally, devastate the countryside of Judah.

8:11-15 ***Conspiracy:*** Or, treason. Isaiah was exhorted by God not to give in to the majority opinion of the people. When they cried out that all was a conspiracy against the nation, he was to remember that what was about to happen was the work of God. When people put their nation before God, they are doomed. ***Fear:*** Godly men must fear God more than they fear men. They must fear God more than the popular beliefs of ungodly societies. ***A stone to strike and a rock to stumble over:*** Israel would stumble over the rock of God's will (Ez 11:16). This historical event would happen again when Jesus, as God's manifestation on earth, was the occasion over which the Jews again stumbled in unbelief (Mt 21:44). Belief in their traditional religiosity was stronger than their willingness to accept Jesus as the Messiah (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

8:16-18 Isaiah sealed the written prophecy and entrusted it to his disciples. He proclaimed the prophetic meaning of the names of his two sons as signs, and then waited for God to bring to pass the fulfillment of the prophecy.

8:19-22 The evidence of a society that has turned away from God is when the people listen to supposed spooks and spirits that are the figment of their own imaginations (See comments Hs 4:6). Mature people with faith in God understand that God created our minds with the ability to imagine unreal fantasies by which we can bring ourselves into the bondage of our own fears. Instead of consulting God through His word, the people in Isaiah's day ran to those who were leading them astray by their presumptuous fantasies. They consulted the fantasies of their imaginations in order to find an answer for the calamities of life. They were sorely wrong in believing such fantasies. ***No light in them:*** Those who do not base their beliefs and behavior on the word of God have no light in them. Those who base their beliefs on their own imaginations have no security or hope for others. Only the word of God is a solid foundation upon which we can base our beliefs.

Chapter 9

9:1-7 Verse 1 in the Hebrew text is a part of the context of chapter 8, and thus should be 8:23. ***A great light:*** Isaiah pictures the reign of the Messiah who brings an era of light and peace. This would be the time of the restored remnant as they submit to the kingdom reign of the Messiah. ***For unto us a child is born:*** Isaiah prophesied that the "Prince of peace" would sit on the throne of David. This Prince would exercise sovereign rule. He would establish the sovereignty by exercising judgment and justice. Luke 1:31-33 is a record of the angel's statement to Mary concerning the child to whom she would give birth. Her child Jesus would reign on the throne of David (Lk 1:32). Heavenly authority was given to Jesus (Mt 28:18). With this authority, He reigned *"over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end"* (Lk 1:33). The Hebrew writer quoted Psalm 45:6,7 in Hebrews 1:8. *"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom."* This was prophesied in Psalm 45 and fulfilled in Jesus as He sat upon the throne of David in the heavenly places when He ascended to the Father (Ep 1:20-23). The Hebrew writer correctly concluded, *"Now this is the main point of the thing we are saying: We have such a High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens"* (Hb 8:1). Jesus has fulfilled Isaiah 9. He is now ruling with all kingly authority as head over all things and as King of kings (See Mt 28:18; 1 Tm 6:15). ***Mighty God:*** Since Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah 9, then He is referred to as God in verse 6. Jesus was an earthly manifestation of the triune God. ***Prince of peace:*** Isaiah prophesied that the "Prince of peace" would sit upon the throne of David. This Prince would exercise sovereign rule. He would establish a sovereignty of judgment and justice. Jesus is now reigning as the Prince of Peace over all things in heaven and on earth.

THE DOOM OF SAMARIA

9:8-12 ***Pride and arrogance:*** Their prosperity had made them feel self-sufficient, and in feeling self-sufficient, they felt that they did not need the help of God. But such arrogance led them into sin, and thus brought on the judgment of God. ***Word ... fallen on Israel:*** This was God's word of judgment of the northern kingdom. ***Ephraim:*** This major tribe of the north was representative of the entire northern kingdom. ***We will build:*** Their arrogance was manifested in their self-reliance. They felt that they could stand on their own strength, and thus did not need the power of God. ***Rezin:*** Once the Assyrians conquered Syria, the Syrians were compelled to join with the Assyrians against the northern kingdom of Israel. Thus the Assyrians, with the Syrians and Philistines, fought against Israel who was caught in between their foes.

9:13-17 Both royalty and common people would suffer from the national calamity that was to come. No one would be spared. The entire culture of the northern kingdom became wicked, and thus it was a nation that had to suffer the consequences of wicked behavior.

9:18-21 The nation was imploding, and thus rivalry moved them to strive against one another. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were descendants of Joseph. Both tribes set themselves against Judah. They were thus consumed by their own wicked behavior against one another. ***Fuel:*** The people were their own fuel, for they had set themselves against one another. When a society becomes evil in its very nature, the citizens turn against one another. ***He will eat:*** In their strife, they were destroying their own brothers. They had moved so far away from their loyalty to one another as the tribes who descended from Jacob, that they fought against one another as rival nations (See comments Mt 10:21,36; Mk 13:12). They moved from being autonomous from one another to the point of destroying one another. ***His hand is stretched out:*** This was God's hand of judgment upon His people.

Chapter 10

10:1-4 The government, with the judges and courts, had become corrupt and unjust. Laws were established that had no regard for the law of God by which they should have been basing their code of conduct. Their laws were twisted and prejudicial toward the poor, widows and orphans. Their courts were means by which they could oppress the people. Simply because a government existed did not mean that the government was righteous. In the case of apostate Israel, their government was sinful. Governments that write constitutions that are contrary to the moral principles of God's law are binding on the people ungodly principles. ***Day of visitation:*** This was the time when God would come on them with destruction through the Assyrian army. When God visits, it is for judgment. ***Leave your glory:*** When God came in judgment, they could not hide their material possessions in which they took pride. The excess of their material prosperity turned them to competing individually with one another. This led to a lack of concern for others as they competed with one another in order to profit more from one another. Their greed thus resulted in their broken relationships with their neighbor.

THE DOOM OF ASSYRIA

10:5-11 ***Rod of My anger:*** Assyria was the instrument of judgment by which God judged Israel. Though Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, did not know this, God was working through him at the right time in history in order to bring him as a rod of punishment upon Israel. God used an ungodly nation to judge what was supposed to be a godly nation. ***Ungodly nation:*** Israel's punishment resulted from the ungodly nature of their government leaders and culture. ***Carchemish ... Arpad ... Damascus:*** The Assyrian king became arrogant in taking credit for his victories over these capital cities that were north of Israel. He took credit for what God had actually accomplished in making it possible for him to conquer these kingdoms. ***Kingdoms of the idols:*** The idols represented the mental strength of a particular kingdom. They represented the spiritual and moral confidence of a nation, and thus the gods of the nations were national gods. They were symbols of patriotism. The idol gods had been created after the patriotic imagination of each nation in order to maintain the loyalty of the people. Thus when the nation fell, the idol god fell. Assyria arrogantly assumed that her idol god was superior to the gods of the nations they had conquered. What they did not know was that the true God of heaven was using them to do His work. What the Assyrians would eventually realize was that their idol gods were not able to deliver them from the Babylonians.

10:12-14 ***I will punish:*** God brought the Assyrian Empire into existence for the purpose of bringing judgment on the apostate Israel. Once the judgment was rendered, there was no more need for the Assyrians. God took them out in order to raise up another nation (the Babylonian Empire) that would in time be used as Assyria in order to bring judgment on Judah. Thus God used pagan nations in order to work all things in history in order to bring about His purpose for the existence of the world and the destiny of Israel.

10:15-19 God's judgment on Assyria for their arrogance will almost bring them to annihilation. There will be so few standing that a child can count them. However, Israel will survive the onslaught of this fierce nation. Though Assyria would be destroyed because of her arrogance against God's people, she would no longer be left as a nation. All that is left of the great Assyrian Empire today are stone monuments.

10:20-23 ***The remnant:*** This word introduces a very significant theme throughout the prophets. God never intended that in His judgment of Israel He would wipe them out of existence. In order that the promises be fulfilled that He made to the fathers, a remnant had to be restored to the promised land for the coming of the Messiah (See Gn 12:1-3). ***Rely on the Lord:*** Ahaz had made an alliance with Assyria in order to gain protection from Israel and Syria to the north. But when considering the remnant that would eventually return after both the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, the people would no longer trust in earthly kings. They would once again be restored to God only as their king. They would once again restore a theocratic government which they had before they cried out for a king on earth as the nations around them.

10:24-27 In the message of the destruction that was to

come upon Israel through the army of Assyria, there was a message of hope. Israel, therefore, must not fear annihilation. It would be the Assyrians who would suffer such destruction. A remnant would remain of Israel. Since this prophecy was directed specifically to the northern ten tribes of Israel, then we must conclude that a remnant of all twelve tribes would be restored. None would be lost forever among the nations. No tribe would go into annihilation. ***The anointing:*** Because Israel was a nation that was playing a part in God's eternal plan of redemption, she would always survive until God had accomplished His plan through her. When the plan was completed, then national Israel would lose her identity in the spiritual Israel of God (See comments Gl 3:26-29).

10:28-34 ***The Lord ... will lop off the bough with terror:*** As the bough, a large branch of a tree, is lopped off, God would lop off Assyria. Assyria became arrogant because of the great accomplishments in battle that God had granted to her. Unfortunately, she sought to advance too far against the people of God. Sennacherib brought his army to the gates of Jerusalem in order to continue the conquest of Judah. However, it was not the time for Judah to fall. She had not digressed in sin as Israel to the north. God would give Judah a little over one hundred years more of existence before bringing the Babylonians as His proxy judgment against Jerusalem. But until then, it was determined by God that Judah would not fall to the Assyrians during the days of Isaiah. Thus when the Assyrians came to take Jerusalem, Hezekiah, the king of Judah, turned to God. God then sent His Angel to kill in one night 185,000 Assyrians. Sennacherib, Assyria's king at the time, returned in disgrace to Nineveh where he was eventually assassinated (37:36-38; 2 Kg 19:35-37).

Chapter 11
GATHERING OF THE REMNANT

11:1-5 This chapter is key to the Messianic messages of Isaiah. The Messiah would shoot from the stem of the house of Jesse. He would be a branch from the family roots. He would go forth with the power of the Holy Spirit. ***Spirit of wisdom:*** He would give right judgments in contrast to the prejudicial judgments that were made by the government officials of Israel at this time in their history. ***Spirit of understanding:*** He would be able to execute judgments that were based on a correct evaluation of all things. He would be able to distinguish what was true and right in all matters of life, regardless of whether one was rich or poor. ***Spirit of counsel:*** He would make impartial judgments by imparting liberating counsel to those who were oppressed. ***Spirit of ... might:*** His destiny would be established, from which destiny He would not detour because of His strong character. He would not vacillate as the kings of the nations among which Israel existed at the time of the writing of this message. ***Spirit of knowledge:*** He would come with the knowledge of God for man. ***Spirit of the fear of the Lord:*** He would come and do the Father's will, from which He would not turn away. He would be obedient in all things. ***Reprove with equity:*** In all things, He would render just judgment and show fairness to all. He would be a relief from the unfair judgments that were made by judges who took bribes. ***Righteousness:*** He would be encircled with that which is right, for in Him there would be no sin. Under the reign of the Branch, justice would be equal for all, for all would be considered equal, regardless of positions or possessions.

11:6-9 These verses describe the relational environment that the Branch would produce among men. In the historical context, it is hard to escape the fact that Isaiah was speaking of the return of the remnant from captivity. This conclusion is indicated by the content of verses 10-16. However, a metaphorical understanding would be that Isaiah was looking beyond the event of the restoration of the remnant. For this reason, in using metaphors of an earthly environment wherein there would be no dangers or strife, this could be a description of the spiritual environment of the church. Since the ones to whom Isaiah wrote had no existing environment that would define the spiritual environment of the church, Isaiah used what was probably the environment of Eden. He did so in order to picture the social environment that the Messiah would produce among those who would be the spiritual Israel on earth, the church (Compare comments Rv 21).

11:10-16 ***Gentiles will seek Him:*** The nation of Israel was to be the banner of the Lord to the nations. However, they forsook that responsibility before they went into captivity. Those who would return from the captivity would proclaim to the world that God was with His people. The root of Jesse, Jesus, would draw the Gentiles to Him through the preaching of the gospel to all the Gentile ethnic groups throughout the world (See comments Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15,16). ***To recover the remnant of His people:*** There would be a literal return of a remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel to the land. They would return for the purpose of receiving the Messiah who would come from the root of Jesse. None of the prophets ever spoke of a national assembly of every Israelite in Palestine after the captivities. Only a remnant of each tribe would return. Herein is described the representatives of some of the tribes who would return to Palestine within the one hundred years after they were first freed from captivity by Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian Empire. There was a remnant of every tribe within the three returns that started in 586 B.C. (See comments Er & Ne). God brought back the remnant in order that an identified national Israel be in existence in Palestine at the time of the coming of the Branch who would sit on the throne of David. Thus the promises and prophecies that were made to the fathers of Israel were identified as fulfilled. ***Judah will not harass Ephraim:*** Their autonomy from one another had led to tribal strife among themselves, which strife led them down a road to God's judgment. ***They will fly:*** The picture here is based on the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian captivity. They will be delivered in a way that they were metaphorically flying free as the birds of the air. Only God could provided such a deliverance. ***Sea of Egypt:*** The Red Sea. ***River:*** Possibly, the Nile. Taken from the exodus of Egypt, the Israelites would come again as a united nation from the opposite direction. They would come from former Assyrian territory, from the land of the Euphrates River.

Chapter 12

12:1-6 This is the conclusion to the preceding preaching and prophecy of Isaiah concerning the return of the remnant and the Messiah. This chapter includes two songs that the returnees were to sing because of their deliverance from captivity. From the time Isaiah wrote these words, it would be about 200 years before the songs would be sung. The song of verses 1 & 2 is a thanksgiving song that is to be sung to God for His deliverance. The song of verse 4 is a song that gives thanks to God for His work among the nations in order that the deliverance of Israel be seen as the work of God. When one takes time to see all that God has done in his personal life, he too can sing to the nations the great things that God does in the lives of His people. God asked Israel that they testify to the fact that it was God who worked the wonder of their return. He would ask us to give Him praise by letting others know what He has done for us in delivering us from the bondage of sin (See comments Lk 8:39; 2 Co 4:15).

Judgment Of Neighboring Nations
(13:1 – 23:18)

Outline: (1) Judgment of Babylon (13:1 – 14:23), (2) Judgment of Assyria (14:24-27), (3) Judgment of Philistia (14:28-32), (4) Judgment of Moab (15:1 – 16:14), (5) Judgment of Damascus (17:1-3), (6) Judgment of Israel (17:4-14), (7) Judgment of Ethiopia and Egypt (18:1 – 20:6), (8) Judgment of Babylon (21:1-10), (9) Judgment of Edom and Arabia (21:11-17), (10) Judah's sin (22:1-14), (11) Message against Shebna (22:15-25), (12) Judgment of Tyre (23:1-18)

Chapter 13
JUDGMENT OF BABYLON

13:1-5 At the time of this prophecy, the Babylonian Empire had not yet come on the scene of world history as a major power. ***Burden:*** Those nations that lifted up their hand against the people of God had to bear the burden of destruction that came from the Lord. Thus Isaiah here gives a pronouncement that Babylon is doomed. ***Sanctified ones:*** These were those nations that God used to bring destruction on other nations. In the historical context of Babylon, the ones set apart by God to bring judgment upon them was the Medo-Persian Empire. After God used the Babylonians to judge Judah, He then used the Medo-Persians to judge Babylon.

13:6-16 ***Day of the Lord:*** This was a time of judgment in time upon those people and nations that God was judging. It was a time of destruction from the Lord. When the destruction came on Babylon, there would be no resistance. Historical records state that there were no major battles when Babylon fell to the Medo-Persian Empire. ***Stars ... sun ... moon:*** This is judgment on the high officials of the government. They would no longer send forth their influence over the people of the kingdom they ruled. They would be punished for their evil. Their arrogant attitudes brought on the judgment. In the judgment, therefore, they would be humbled. Arrogant tyrants who handed down injustice to the people would themselves be judged justly for their wickedness. ***Every man will return to his own people:*** As a stampede of wild animals, those who were expatriates in Babylon would flee Babylon to their home countries in order to escape the fall of the empire. This prophecy would be fulfilled decades later.

13:17-22 ***Medes:*** Centuries before these events took place, Isaiah named those who would be God's "sanctified ones" who would bring to an end the Babylonian Empire. ***Not value silver ... gold:*** When the Medes and Persians joined in a united force against the Babylonian Empire, they would not be stopped by any tribute that might be offered by the Babylonians. ***No pity:*** The Medo-Persian army had no mercy in bringing down the Babylonian Empire. ***Sodom and Gomorrah:*** As these two cities remained uninhabited for centuries after their destruction, so would Babylon. The Arabian bedouins would not pitch their tents there or use the area to pasture their flocks. The entire region would be haunted by wild beasts who roamed freely throughout the territory where the famous city was located.

Chapter 14

14:1,2 When God brought judgment on Israel, Babylon was used as His proxy judge. However, Israel's restoration meant that Babylon had been judged. God would have mercy on His people, and thus restore them to the land of their possession. ***Captors captive:*** Reference here could be to the deliverance of Israel during Esther's time, and/or to the time when the remnant left Babylonian territory under the direction of the Medo-Persian King Cyrus. A decree was written by Cyrus to allow the Jewish captives to return to the land. When they prepared for their journey back, those of the old Babylonian nation were to aid them in whatever way possible. The Jews were exalted over the Babylonians because of the decrees of the Medo-Persian King Cyrus.

14:3-11 Verses 5-24 are a taunt of the Babylonians. The world tyrant was to be brought down, down to Sheol and the worms that consume dead bodies. The staff of Babylon's wicked and harsh manner by which she dealt with other nations is to be broken. The scepter of authority by which she reigned over other countries has fallen. The nations are at peace because the Empire has fallen. The Babylonian Empire represented an era of empires that conquered in order to plunder. The Medo-Persian Empire conquered in order to rule and bring peace among conflicting nations (See comments Er & Ne). ***Trees rejoice:*** The personification is that the invading Babylonian army would no longer cut down trees in order to conquer cities. ***Sheol:*** Those who have already passed to the grave taunted the arrogant Babylonian leaders who also had now been brought down to the grave. Death is the great equalizer.

14:12-21 These verses continue the taunt of Babylon, and specifically the arrogant king of Babylon. ***Morning star:*** This is a reference to the one identified in verse 16 as the man who made the nations of the world tremble. Though the king of Babylon exalted himself to the position of a god, he was humbled and humiliated to Sheol. He was a morning star that brought light by his power and influence, but quickly was brought down to darkness by God. He made the nations of the world tremble. Now he must tremble in Sheol for the eternal condemnation to come (Mt 25:41). ***All the kings of the nations:*** Those whom Babylon humbled were buried with honor, but the morning star of Babylon suffered the abomina-

tion of being trodden under foot by men. ***Destroyed your land ... people:*** When evil rulers take control of their countries for their own benefit, they have little concern for the people. They will sacrifice the people for the sake of continuing in power. ***His children:*** The children will not bear the guilt of their wicked fathers, but they will suffer the consequences of their sinful actions. The family of the wicked king of Babylon had to suffer the consequences of their wicked father.

14:22,23 God's judgment is just because those who are judged with condemnation have brought condemnation on themselves by their wicked deeds.

JUDGMENT OF ASSYRIA

14:24-27 This brief statement in reference to Assyria places the beginning of God's judgments on the nations (Assyria and Babylon) in the historical context of the imminent fall of the northern kingdom and threat of the southern kingdom. Assyria would take the north captive. Babylon would later take the south. Both nations were arrogantly bringing destruction upon God's people. In the same prophecy concerning the doom of the captors, Assyria is briefly mentioned with Babylon. Both Assyria and Babylonia would be judged for arrogantly laying their hands on God's people. ***Surely as I have thought:*** Nothing would deter the coming judgment upon Assyria. The doom was certain because God knew that they would not repent of their wickedness.

JUDGMENT OF PHILISTIA

14:28-32 See 2 Ch 28:18-27. It is difficult to determine the exact date of the death of Ahaz. He could have died anywhere from 727 to 716 B.C. ***Do not rejoice:*** The Assyrian's threat of Philistia was broken with the death of Tiglath-pileser. They must not rejoice, however, for their rejoicing will be premature. ***Serpent's root:*** Sargon succeeded Tiglath-pileser, and was a more vicious king. ***Flying serpent:*** Sennacherib succeeded Sargon, and then ravaged southern Palestine, including Philistia. Though there would be a remnant of Israel, there would be no survivors of Philistia. In the destruction to come upon Philistia, even the poor of God's people would be better off than Philistia. God's remnant can find refuge in the Lord, but the Philistines have no one in whom they can trust. Their gods would not deliver them.

Chapter 15

JUDGMENT OF MOAB

15:1-9 The two principal cities of Moab would fall in one night. The Moabites would thus shave their heads and cut off their beards. They would wail while clothed in garments that manifested deep sorrow. They would ascend to their idols on the high places, but there would be no answer from their false gods. ***My heart will cry out for Moab:*** Isaiah had sympathy for Moab. He realized that God would bring great suffering on this people. Even those who would escape the battles would face calamity. They would face calamity because the places to which they would flee would also be turned to waste lands. And though they fled, the rivers would run red with blood as the conquering soldiers ran them down.

Chapter 16

16:1-5 Moab's only hope was to send to Judah a peace offering from Petra (Sela) to which they had fled. They would do this in order to find refuge for themselves as fugitives. Throughout their early history, Moab was not hospitable to Israel in the days after Israel's wilderness wandering when they were approaching the land of Canaan. Now Moab, in her own wilderness wandering, would plead to Israel for sanctuary. The historical tables were to be turned. ***Hide the outcasts:*** Isaiah asked for Israel to be the forgiving relative, for the Moabites were also descendants from Abraham. ***In mercy the throne will be established:*** God has no mercy on those who show no mercy (Js 2:13). If Judah shows mercy to her relatives, the Moabites, then she herself would receive mercy. The throne of David would thus be continued because it had been established on a foundation of mercy.

16:6,7 Moab was known for being arrogant and haughty. But within a few years from the time of this prophecy, she would be humbled. Her cry to Israel for help must be heard and responded to with mercy, not judgment.

16:8-12 The food supply of Moab would be destroyed. When the attacking destroyer came upon her, the battle shout would replace the shout for joy they made during their harvests. When the enemy was upon them, the Moabites cried out to their god Chemosh, but there was no reply. For Isaiah, it was a pitiful sight to see men cry out to a god they had created after their own imagination. When men create gods that conform to their own beliefs, they cry out to these gods only when they are in trouble.

16:13,14 ***Word that the Lord has spoken:*** See Nm 24:17; Dt 23:3,4. ***Years of a hireling:*** As a servant counts the days of his contract in order to fulfill the exact number of days of labor, so the proclamation made concerning Moab would be for a definite period of time.

Chapter 17

JUDGMENT OF DAMASCUS

17:1-3 Syria had made an alliance with Israel, the northern kingdom, in order to bring Judah in with them to defend themselves against the Assyrians. Isaiah's message to those in Judah was that both Syria and Israel would fall, which fall came in 734 B.C. Damascus, the capital of Syria, would be destroyed to the extent that it would become an open range for the grazing of unattended flocks. The destruction of Ephraim, the northern kingdom, would manifest the passing of much of the glory of ten tribes of Israel. Nevertheless, there would still be a remnant that would be restored in the future from the ten tribes of the north.

JUDGMENT OF ISRAEL

17:4-6 Jacob, the northern kingdom, would be reaped by the Assyrians. Her sins had made her ripe for God's judgment. However, though she would be reaped because of her sins, there would be a remnant left as the reaper leaves a few olives on the branches that he cannot reach. ***Bough:*** The branch of a tree, usually the larger branches.

17:7,8 God's judgment on the northern kingdom, and Isra-

el as a whole, accomplished the purpose for which He allowed them to go into captivity. They had forsaken Him by following after their own desires. Their apostasy was manifested by creating false gods and idols they imagined with their minds, and then crafted with their hands. When the remnant returned from Babylonian captivity many years later, never again did Israel become an idolatrous nation.

17:9-11 Because they had abandoned God, God turned them over to the Assyrians. He had been their salvation since the time of their flight from Egyptian captivity centuries before. But now they had forsaken His protection. They would thus go into captivity where they would labor as slaves in a land of foreign gods. The fruits of their fields would be for another, while their homeland would be left vacant. They had planted in hope in their homeland, but reaped grief and sorrow because of their apostasy.

17:12-14 At the end of the preceding pronouncements of condemnation, comes this note of hope that the Assyrians would also meet their doom. They might sound like the noise of the waves of the sea, or the rushing wind of a storm, but in one night they would come to silence. ***Portion ... lot:*** The consequence of Assyria's strike against God's people was that 185,000 Assyrians died in one night outside the walls of Jerusalem. They laid their heads down in the evening, not knowing the trouble that was to come. In the morning, they were no more. Such was God's punishment of those who sought to lay their hand on God's people without the permission of God.

Chapter 18
JUDGMENT OF ETHIOPIA AND EGYPT

18:1-7 The Assyrians were marching to the south from Syria. They had conquered the northern countries, and thus the Ethiopians and Egyptians were greatly concerned. If all of Israel fell, then they would be next. The historical context may be a time when the Ethiopians sent ambassadors to Judah in order to confer with them concerning the threat of the Assyrians. Here they are told that God is working among the nations of the world according to His own plan. What was happening among the nations would not be determined by the alliance of nations with one another. God took His rest in that He was working all things according to His divine plan to discipline Israel, and then restore the repentant remnant for the coming of the Messiah. ***Shadowing with wings:*** Possibly a reference to the small sail boats of the Nile River. ***Rivers:*** The Blue and White Nile Rivers. The territory to which reference is made here would include the land from modern Somalia to Egypt. ***Tall and bronze:*** The Ethiopians were a people of appealing physical features. They were a people of bronze skin and tall in stature. ***Gift of homage:*** When the Egyptians and Ethiopians, as the rest of the world, see the destruction of the Assyrians, it will be a banner to the world of God's deliverance of Israel. When they saw the deliverance, they too would bring their gifts of homage to the Lord. The deliverance of the Lord by the sudden death of the 185,000 Assyrians outside the walls of Jerusalem was not only a deliverance of Judah, but also of Egypt and Ethiopia. The rest of the nations clearly saw that the God of Israel was working for His people in order to deliver them.

Chapter 19

This chapter is divided into two messages. In verses 1-17 Isaiah pictures a nation that digresses into moral degradation and falsehoods. In verses 18-25 he pictures a nation in repentance that is seeking the Lord.

19:1-4 ***Idols ... tremble:*** Since the idols were the representation of gods they had created after their own imagination, then their religious and mental security would be shaken at the presence of the true God. ***Egyptians against Egyptians:*** Egypt was a polytheistic nation. The Egyptians had created gods for every aspect of life. A polytheistic nation, therefore, is easily set against itself because of the confusion that is produced by belief in many gods. Prior to 712 B.C., Egypt was in civil conflict because of the lack of any strong central government. ***Consult ... idols ... charmers ... mediums ... sorcerers:*** Their religions were fictitious, something that they had created in their own minds. The idols were only the product of their hands. Charmers, mediums and sorcerers were only agents who controlled the feelings and emotions of the people by convincing people that they had power over the unseen world. People who are in digression from truth, therefore, invent for themselves supposed fantasies by which they seek to help themselves. They are thus led astray by their own imaginations of spirits and demons that exist only in their minds. This is the spirit of idolatry. Those who allow the imagination of their own minds to control their behavior are idolaters. Those who allow imagined spooks and spirits to control their lives through fear, have fallen from the one true and living God. God has revealed through His word how He works among men. Those who refuse to define the work of God through His word have fallen victim to their own imaginations. Those who assume that God has allowed Satan to work mischief among men according to his own will have failed to understand in the word of God the great limitations God has placed on Satan. ***A cruel lord:*** Those who continue in their ignorance of the true God will elect for themselves officials or misguided spiritual leaders who will be dictators over them. Those who are ignorant can never be free from the oppression of despots, whether religious or political.

19:5-10 ***Waters:*** These were the many irrigation canals that the Egyptians dug from the Nile River. ***Sea:*** This was the Nile River during the time of its flooding season. ***River:*** The Nile River. The Nile was the source of life for Egypt. If it dried up, the nation would die, for it was a nation in a desert area. What is pictured is the total collapse of the Egyptian farming industry and businesses. The country would become bankrupt.

19:11-15 ***Zoan:*** Or, Tanis. ***Counsellors:*** Those who were advisers to Pharaoh came to their position through inheritance. However, though they descended from those who were counsellors, there was no guarantee that they would give wise counsel to Pharaoh. Isaiah proclaimed that they were not giving wise counsel. He challenged them to determine the judgment that God was proclaiming concerning their fate. The counsellors were predicting a prosperous future for the nation, but Isaiah was prophesying doom. ***Noph:*** Or, Memphis. ***Seduced Egypt:*** The false prophets of the land deceived

the leadership into thinking that there was a bright future for the country. Thus the nation economically and morally staggered as a drunken man.

19:16,17 As a woman who easily fears because she is weak, so will the nation of Egypt be when God brings judgment upon her. Since these words of judgment came from a prophet of Judah, the Egyptians would come to fear the God of Judah. It is only when nations come to fear God that they can restore themselves.

19:18-25 Though national conversion is almost impossible, the picture here is the redemption of Egypt. It did continue to exist as a nation, though the other cities on which the prophets of God pronounced doom ceased to exist. ***Language of Canaan:*** This could have been the Hebrew language by which the message of hope was proclaimed to Egypt. ***City of Righteousness:*** The context looks forward to a time when Egypt will turn away from its polytheism in order to worship the one true God. They would bring offerings to the Lord, which offerings would be accepted because they would make their vows to the Lord and keep them. They would be healed because they responded to the chastisement of the Lord. The result of their healing would be their national communication and commerce with Israel and Assyria that would be of benefit of all the people. ***Highway:*** Israel was the central trading route between Assyria and Egypt. The communication between Egypt and Assyria to the north would benefit all the nations. God had given Israel the land of Palestine for this very reason. However, they failed to remain faithful to God. God took them away as the highway of commerce between the nations.

Chapter 20

20:1-6 There were some in Jerusalem who thought that they could escape to Egypt. However, since this judgment was coming on Egypt, they could not escape by fleeing to Egypt. ***Tartan:*** Or, "commander in chief." Ashdod was the gate city in southern Philistia, with Azuria as its king. Azuria refused to submit and pay tribute to Assyria. Coming from the north in 711 B.C., Sargon deposed Azuria and placed his brother Akhismit on the throne. However, the people rebelled against Akhismit, and then put Yaman on the throne of Ashdod. This moved Sargon to march his army against Ashdod, defeat it, and then carry off all its riches to Nineveh. ***Naked and barefoot:*** This was a prophecy that was demonstrated before the people of Judah. This illustrated prophecy manifested before the people the captives who were going into exile. If this were to be the destiny of the Egyptians and Ethiopians, then certainly Judah should not make any alliance with them.

Chapter 21

JUDGMENT OF BABYLON

21:1-10 The historical setting of this oracle was probably during the rebellion against Assyria by Merodachbaladan that took place in 710 B.C. He had failed in efforts to recruit other nations to help throw off the Assyrian domination. ***Wilderness of the Sea:*** In ancient writings southern Babylonia was called by this name. The grim revelation that Isaiah saw was Assyria coming off the desert as a hot whirlwind. As the plunderer of nations, she was still doing the same. She would see the plunder of Babylon. Isaiah was stunned at what he saw in the prophecy. His mind reeled with dismay. He saw the Babylonians distracted by festivals when they should be watchful for the approaching Assyrian army. ***Lion:*** The roar of a lion demands attention, and thus the watchman did not leave his post. The sounds that were heard were those of a city that was fallen. Babylon had fallen to the Assyrians. ***Oh my threshing:*** This is an idiomatic statement that refers to the affliction of God's people. They could not make an alliance with the Egyptians and Ethiopians. Neither could they depend on the Babylonians. It was a time when the future of Judah was uncertain. It was uncertain because she was surrounded by the battle cries of the Assyrians who would seek to take Jerusalem. Jerusalem stood alone, but would not fall to the Assyrians. This was one of God's evidences that He was still working with His people. All the major cities had fallen to Assyria. But Jerusalem would not.

JUDGMENT OF EDOM AND ARABIA

21:11,12 ***Dumah:*** This is a reference to Edom. The word "*Dumah*" means "silence." During Assyria's conquest of Ashdod, Edom had sided with Ashdod. Therefore, as Assyria marched against both Palestine and Babylonia, she called to Judah to see if there would be light from the onslaught of the Assyrians. Isaiah's prophetic answer was that when the light of the Assyrians had gone out, there would come the Babylonians who would eventually succeed the Assyrians. After them would come the Medo-Persians and other world empires as the Greeks and Romans. There was thus no hope for Edom.

21:13-15 During the Assyrians' era of domination, the Arabian caravans that roamed in trading throughout the area southeast of Jerusalem, would be interrupted. They could not use their normal trade routes between the Persian Gulf, Palestine and Egypt. The Assyrians disrupted all trade. The traders were forced to flee to thickets and caves.

21:16,17 The prophecy is that the nomadic warriors of Arabia would be wiped out within the time that Isaiah revealed. **Kedar:** Compare Gn 25:13-15. This was possibly the area east of the Dead Sea. It was the central region of the northern part of the Arabian peninsula.

Chapter 22

JUDAH'S SIN

22:1-7 The historical background of this prophecy is possibly 701 B.C. when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, temporarily left his focus on Jerusalem and pursued the remnant of the Egyptian army after he defeated them at Eltekeh. He sent part of his army to ravage the countryside of Judah, and then threaten Jerusalem. There may have been celebrations in Jerusalem when he turned his focus toward the Egyptians. Isaiah knew that it was not a time for rejoicing since Rabshakeh, Sennacherib's commander of officers, would be at the gates of Jerusalem, demanding a total surrender. ***Housetops:*** They were celebrating on their housetops. ***I will weep bitter-***

ly: When the cowardly leaders fled, the people would be left vulnerable to the enemy. It was in view of this sad scenario that Isaiah wept over the city. ***Elam ... Kir:*** These two armies of the Assyrians would advance on Jerusalem. They would set themselves against the gates of the city.

22:8-11 ***House of the forest:*** This was a strong house that was built by Solomon. ***Waters of the lower pool:*** Hezekiah had repaired the walls (2 Ch 32:5) and dug a tunnel to bring the water from the outside of the walls into the city (See "Hezekiah's Tunnel" in *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide*). Many other defensive preparations were made in order to prepare for an attack. ***Maker:*** In all their preparations, they failed to trust in God who would defend them against the attack of any enemy.

22:12-14 It was a time when they should have been fasting and praying in repentance, but they were feasting with joy and trusting in themselves. ***Let us eat and drink:*** This was a flippant statement made by those who scoffed at the prophecy of Isaiah.

MESSAGE AGAINST SHEBNA

22:15-19 Shebna was possibly a foreigner over the king's palace. He had probably said that the Egyptians would defeat the Assyrians and all would be well. He had cut out a tomb for his own burial, thinking that he would live out his life in peace in Jerusalem. But Isaiah said that he was about to go into captivity and die in a foreign land. He would go into captivity as a result of his sinful leadership of the people.

22:20-25 ***Eliakim:*** The responsibility that Shebna carried would be transferred to Eliakim. He would be the benefactor to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ***Key:*** He would receive the authority to govern the people. In this prophecy, the "key," or authority of the house of David, would be given to One in the future who had the power to open and shut. The word "key" is used as a metaphor to represent authority. A literal key is something that unlocks. The one who possesses a literal key has the authority to literally unlock that which is concealed. As a metaphor, the one with the key has the authority to unlock what is concealed from men. Isaiah 22:22 was first fulfilled in Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah. However, Isaiah had something greater in mind as he pointed Israel to another era in the future. The One coming would be given the authority to "unlock." The One who would be coming would have "all authority" over all things in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). Isaiah prophesied that the key of the house of David would be given to the King to come. The angel of Revelation 3:7 stated that Jesus presently has this key of authority. *"These things says He who is holy and true, who has the key of David. He opens and no one shuts, and no one opens."* The Greek present tense in Revelation 3:7 indicates that at the time of the writing of Revelation, Jesus had the key of David. At the time John wrote, it was not something Jesus was yet to receive in the future. He received this key after His resurrection when He ascended to the throne in heaven to receive dominion, glory and kingdom reign (Dn 7:13,14). He now has heavenly authority (Mt 28:18). ***Nail ... removed:*** In verses 23-25 Isaiah takes our minds back to the immediate historical context of Eliakim. His heritage would be nailed in a sure place. However, his worthless and incompetent descendants would cause his family to fall. They would disgrace his family, and thus the family would be brought down because of their sin. The nepotism of many officials has brought down their ministry.

Chapter 23

JUDGMENT OF TYRE

This prophecy speaks of the fall (vss 1-14) and restoration of the city of Tyre (vss 15-18). The calamity of Tyre began in the days of the Assyrian conquest of Palestine and continued to the days of Nebuchadnezzar when the Babylonian Empire became a world power. Its restoration came after the return of the captives during the Medo-Persian Empire, and continued throughout the days of the Greek Empire.

23:1-7 ***Ships ... harbor:*** King Hiram, who was contemporary with Solomon, made Tyre one of the best port cities of all Palestine, and throughout the Mediterranean Sea. It was an ancient city that was fortified about 250 years before King Solomon. Phoenician ships left the harbor of Tyre and sailed to as far as Tarshish of Spain. ***Chittim:*** Reference is primarily to Cyprus. ***Sidon:*** This was the mother city of Tyre. ***River:*** The Nile River of Egypt. Tyre was a port city that harbored a vast trading business throughout the Mediterranean Sea. Its wealth was in its trading of goods that were brought from the other countries of the Mediterranean. Countries to the east of Tyre and Sidon came for trade with merchant ships that brought goods from the west. ***Market of nations:*** When the Assyrians conquered the territory to the east of the coastal city of Tyre, the traders from the west could no longer come to buy goods from Tyre. The trading business thus failed, as did Tyre. If the traders from the east were cut off, then the Mediterranean nations ceased to trade with merchants from Tyre.

23:8-14 Tyre was laid desolate because of the decline in commerce. The fulfillment of this prophecy came about in a manner by which the people living in Tyre and Sidon would not perceive that it was the work of God among the nations of the world. Since God was using Assyria to discipline the northern kingdom of Israel, the economic result of Assyria's advance on Israel resulted in the interruption of all trade through Tyre and Sidon. The residents of Tyre and Sidon would not have attributed this economic downturn to God's work among the nations since they would not have believed in the work of God through Isaiah. The economic fall of Tyre and Sidon was collateral judgment upon these two cities who failed to have God in their conscience. And so it is today when nations fail to consider God as He works among the nations of the world. ***Shook the kingdoms:*** Though we do not perceive the direct hand of God in working among the nations, we must always be aware of the fact that God is working all things according to His eternal plan. When God shakes the nations, it is for a purpose. That purpose is to bring His people into eternal dwelling. For this reason, God's people must not become dismayed when the nations are shaken, but give glory to God for working in this world for the sake of His people. ***The Chaldeans:*** The Babylonian Empire had its seed beginnings with the Assyrians. In 710 B.C. Sargon, king of

Assyria, conquered the city of Babylon. However, in 705 B.C. the Babylonians regained their independence. But again, in 704 B.C. Sennacherib of Assyria again conquered the city. He did so again in 700 B.C., and then made his son the viceroy of the city. Isaiah's illustration in reference to the Chaldeans in the context of this prophecy was that Tyre should not get their hopes up. She will be as Babylon under the Assyrians.

23:15-18 ***70 years:*** This would be a time of national calamity, after which there would be a time of restoration. After the 70 years that was designated for the national calamity of Judah in Babylonian captivity, the Medo-Persians overcame the Babylonian Empire. After its years of calamity, Tyre also would be restored as a commercial trading port for the Medo-Persian Empire. However, when Alexander the Great swept across the ancient Medo-Persian Empire, he laid siege to Tyre in 332 B.C. The fortified island city was conquered and its inhabitants were deported to Carthage. The former joyous city then became a heap of ruins. ***Make sweet melody:*** As a harlot would rejoice in the restoration of her financial gain, so Tyre would be restored once again to prosper from her trade among the nations. But her trade would be restored only because God was working in the nations.

Divine Sovereignty
Manifested Through Judgment
(24:1 – 27:13)

Outline: (1) Judgment to come (24:1-23), (2) Reasons for Judah to praise God (25:1-12), (3) Captives are set free (26:1-21), (4) Judgment and preservation (27:1-13)

Chapter 24
JUDGMENT TO COME

The content of this chapter may have been written either as apocalyptic literature in reference to the general outcome of all things, or it may be prophetic in that it refers to something specific in the future. Apocalyptic literature incorporates many metaphors. It is the challenge of the Bible student to understand the metaphors by understanding the literal basis from which the metaphors were drawn. Though prophetic language contains many symbols and metaphors, both the audience to whom the prophecy is directed, and the recipients, have enough experiential background from which the symbolism is derived. There is enough information to identify the meaning of the metaphor in order to make a correct conclusion concerning the fulfillment of the prophecy. But in reference to apocalyptic literature, Bible students are often overzealous to attach speculative interpretations to the symbols and metaphors, and consequently they often allow their present circumstances to be the foundation upon which they make their interpretations. If we would conclude that this is apocalyptic literature with a general picture of chaotic times, then it would apply to the social and national conditions that were relevant to Isaiah's audience. But the general principles of God's work among the nations would also have application to different periods of social chaos and national calamity throughout history (See intro. to Rv).

24:1-6 ***Scatters:*** Whenever there is a national calamity, there are refugees. National calamity touches all citizens of a nation. No one can escape the trauma of national economic chaos. In the interlinked world today, the entire world is affected by those first world economies upon which the world depends. ***The earth:*** What the prophet envisioned was calamity that would come upon the earth. We know that this will eventually happen at the end of time (2 Pt 3). However, we do not know if this is the meaning that we should attach to this context. The apocalyptic statement here may have been given in order that individual nations come to the conclusion that if the whole world would suffer from such a calamity, then certainly individual nations would experience the same fate. ***Because they have transgressed:*** Man brings upon himself his own calamity. God allows nations to destroy themselves. But because He is working all things together for His purpose, He takes ownership of the responsibility. He does so because He could have prevented nations from going into chaos and destruction. However, we must keep in mind that in the historical context of what was happening in reference to Israel, God was working in order to preserve a remnant of Israel for the entrance of the Messiah into the world. ***The curse has devoured the earth:*** Man cursed himself with sin in the garden of Eden. He reaps what he sows, and thus brings destruction to society, and indirectly, the entire world at the end of time.

24:7-13 The party is over. Confusion prevails. There is chaos in the streets and the people barricade themselves in their homes. The survivors hide themselves in fear of intruders. The joy of the land is gone and the very last gleaned grape (joy) is taken away.

24:14-20 ***They will sing:*** There is hope in the midst of a prophetic picture of destruction. The righteous remnant will emerge. ***Dawning light:*** This would be a reference to the rising sun in the east. The righteous remnant would come back to Jerusalem from the east out of captivity. The songs of praises would again come to the city. ***Sea:*** The Mediterranean Sea. ***Dealt treacherously:*** Isaiah turns to those in society who took advantage of others. They were thieves who were brazenly going about stealing from others. A society is broken when it begins to morally implode. When those in a society turn on themselves, chaos and calamity follow. Isaiah's picture is that when the hunted try to escape, they are themselves entrapped. ***Earth is utterly broken:*** See 2:19; Am 1:1. An earthquake emotionally shakes people. The social chaos that prevails leaves people hopeless and confused. They emotionally go about as a staggering drunk. The cause of emotional instability is sin. Man brings on himself his own social chaos and destruction through sin.

24:21-23 This apocalyptic picture is reminiscent of Matthew 25:41 (See 2 Pt 2:4). In the end, God will not only bring the wicked kings of this world into the judgment of condemnation, but also Satan and his angels (See 2 Th 1:8,9). In the context, it may be that Isaiah was referring to the gods that the people had created after their own image, which gods they manufactured to conform to their own lusts. God brings judgment upon the wicked in time, as well as at the end of time. In Isaiah's context, God would bring judgment upon those whom He used to discipline His people. They would be brought

down because of their arrogance. This would be judgment in time. At the end of time, all wickedness of the world would be brought down.

Chapter 25
REASONS FOR JUDAH TO PRAISE GOD

25:1-5 In this first of three songs of victory, Isaiah first exalts God for keeping His covenant that He established with His people. There is rejoicing over the fall of the city of the captors who brought the captives into captivity. God is able to bring down all strongholds of the enemy. For this reason, the enemies of God must honor and fear Him. When God blasted the strongholds of the oppressors of Israel with His breath, He at the same time became the refuge to the poorest of the poor. Because He is a protecting canopy for His people, He brings to silence those who have dealt ruthlessly with His people with whom He has a covenant relationship.

25:6-8 This second song is a part of a celebratory banquet of victory. Mt. Zion is the spiritual refuge of God's people. Having a banquet with God at the end of great turmoil is a hope that is given to His people (See Ps 36:8; 63:5; Mt 8:11; 26:29; Rv 19:7-9). It is a celebratory feast of victory over all those who have set themselves against God's eternal plan. The banquet is possible because of God's work in the nations of the world. The banquet is a deliverance from the thirst and hunger that was brought on by the famine of living in a fallen world. It is a banquet celebrating deliverance from the fear of death (See comments 1 Co 15:54,55; Hb 2:14,15). It is a celebration of deliverance from the environment wherein the curse of sin brought persecution to the people of God.

25:9-12 The third song celebrates the fact that faith has brought its reward. Victory generates thanksgiving. The Lord delivered on His promises, and thus the delivered are overcome with a song of gratitude. The proud and haughty have been overcome, and the righteous rejoice. Moab, the nation that seduced the people of God into committing fornication, is gone (Gn 19:30-38; Nm 25:1).

Chapter 26
CAPTIVES ARE SET FREE

26:1-6 ***A strong city:*** This is not a reference to a city with physical walls. Reference is to the "salvation" of the Lord. It is the spiritual protection that God provides for the spiritual city of righteousness. ***Open:*** This is the great commission that people come into the salvation of God's city that is on earth for all men (Compare Mt 11:28-30). ***Peace:*** One has peace of mind only when he understands that it is God who protects him. Our trust, therefore, must be solely in God. ***Focused:*** One cannot have the peace that God offers if the focus of his life is split between the security of the possessions of this world and trust in God. Our focus on God must generate emotional stability to the point that if we lose everything, we do not falter in our faith. ***Strength:*** When we are convinced that God is working in our lives, we become confident in the fact that He will care for us, both in life and in death. ***The lofty city:*** In contrast to the strong city of verse 1, arrogance and pride identify the lofty city. This is the city that God will bring down. The contrast between the two cities emphasizes the principle that pride must be conquered in the life of the righteous (See comments Mt 18:1-6; 23:12). ***The poor:*** See comments Js 2:1-7.

26:7-11 ***The way:*** God helps His people to overcome obstacles in life (Pv 3::6; Jr 31:9). ***The desire of our soul:*** God works for those who have desired to be His people. His name is thus glorified by their behavior (Jn 12:28). ***Your judgments:*** The righteous often do not receive justice. The righteous, therefore, wait for the final justice that God will render at the final judgment. Those of this world can know the just judgments of God only when those who are His behave themselves according to His will. ***Grace:*** Since God's judgments come with grace and mercy, then those of this world who are mistreated do not take revenge on those who persecute them. It is the desire of the righteous that God's grace be extended to the wicked in order that they might repent. ***Majesty of the Lord:*** Those who deal unjustly with their fellow man cannot understand the grace of God. ***The fire:*** See Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9.

26:12-19 ***Other lords:*** Israel had experienced the turmoil that comes from being in the bondage of other nations. It was God's original plan that they dwell in peace in the land of promise. However, because of their apostasy to other gods, God delivered them over to those who brought no peace. Only by trusting in God is there true peace of mind. We can know that we are trusting in God only if we live according to His word. ***You have visited and destroyed them:*** Peace of mind came when God rescued His people out of the bondage of those to whom He had delivered them. When their captors were gone, Israel continued as the people of God. Israel's captors are forgotten, but God's people remain in peace. ***Increased the nation:*** The preservation and increase of the remnant of Israel was a manifestation that God was working to preserve the seedline of Abraham. He was doing this through Israel in order to accomplish His eternal purposes. ***Whispered prayer:*** While suffering the travail of bondage, they were helpless. It was only God who could deliver them. And He did deliver them when their cries came unto Him. ***We gave birth:*** Their efforts to deliver themselves were as a false pregnancy. It was only a delivery of wind. ***Your dead will live:*** Isaiah revealed here the final hope of all men on earth. There is a resurrection to come. It will be an event in which all who are in tombs will come forth (See comments Jn 5:28,29).

26:20,21 Israel's deliverance from the captivity of their captors is metaphorical of the deliverance of His people in the end. His people will eventually be delivered from the wickedness and bondage of this world in order to be restored to peace within His presence. Nationally, Israel cried out for deliverance from bondage in order that they might enjoy the protection and peace they once enjoyed in the land of promise. When the deliverance came for His people in bondage, the Assyrians and Babylonians were gone. Deliverance of the people of God, therefore, meant the destruction of the wicked (2 Th 1:6-9).

Chapter 27
JUDGMENT AND PRESERVATION

27:1-6 This is the song of the sword of the Lord. The

sword is tempered for strength. It is grim because of the destruction it can do. It is sweeping in that it cuts a wide swath of death. ***Leviathan ... twisted serpent ... reptile:*** Leviathan is probably a reference to a desert snake that darts from danger. The twisted serpent was the coiled serpent. The reptile was possibly the crocodile of the Nile. The metaphors picture Assyria, Babylon and Egypt who apocalyptically represent the power of evil on earth that is opposed to God's people. Egypt held Israel in captivity. Assyria and Babylon took them into captivity. However, God has kept His holy people and protected them throughout the centuries. He has been the eternal gardener who has continually watered His vineyard. He has consumed the briers and thorns in order that Jacob take root and bud forth throughout the world. The fact that Israel was delivered from the captivity of three nations is evidence that God was working in His people.

27:7-11 God disciplined His people because of their sin. However, God's punishment that He brought on His people was not as the punishment that He brought on the nations who held His people in captivity. God's punishment of His people for their apostasy was tempered with mercy. He disciplined with love. His punishment was to purge them of their sin, and in doing so, His people had to purge themselves of idolatry, as well as cut down the Asherah groves where they committed their spiritual adultery by bowing down to foreign gods. Those people of God, therefore, who did not bow down in repentance to the loving chastisement of God, reaped the same punishment that God rendered to the unbelieving nations. But if His people tried to build a fortified city against God's chastisement, then they would have no understanding of His work.

27:12,13 ***One by one:*** Those who would return from the captivity would be the devoted ones. ***They will come:*** From the dispersed children of the twelve tribes of Israel that were scattered throughout the former Assyrian Empire, and as far south as Egypt, the remnant would be brought back into the land of promise. God would thresh out the grain from the chaff, and bring the devoted again into the land. ***Ready to perish:*** If Israel had stayed in captivity, the nation would have lost her identity. The purpose for the restoration, therefore, was to preserve the identity of Israel until the Messiah came. Only by preserving the identity of Israel until the coming of the Messiah could it be affirmed that God had fulfilled His promises to the fathers.

Trust In God, Not In Man
(28:1 – 35:10)

Outline: (1) Woe to Israel's leadership (28:1-6), (2) Woe to Judah's leadership (28:7-29), (3) Woe to deceivers (29:1-24), (4) A covenant with Egypt (30:1-17), (5) Judah delivered from Assyria (30:18-33), (6) Calamity for trusting in Egypt (31:1-9), (7) Righteousness and repentance (32:1-20), (8) Doom of Assyria (33:1-24), (9) God's vengeance (34:1-17), (10) The remnant and restoration (35:1-10)

Chapter 28
WOE TO ISRAEL'S LEADERSHIP

28:1-6 God brings down judgment on the leaders of His people. In this context, the leadership had drunken itself into unethical and immoral examples. This denunciation is delivered against the northern kingdom, with Ephraim, the principal tribal group, who represented all ten tribes. ***A mighty and strong one:*** The Assyrians. God chose this nation to bring judgment upon the northern kingdom. The Assyrians would come to Samaria, to the leadership that had feasted itself into a drunken stupor.

WOE TO JUDAH'S LEADERSHIP

28:7-10 ***They also:*** Isaiah turns to the leadership of Judah. Though the leadership of the northern kingdom led the people into foreign alliances and moral degradation, they were not alone. The leaders of Judah were also guilty of social degradation. They too had corrupted rulers and religious leaders. Isaiah was God's chosen prophet. However, there were other false preachers in their midst who were stupefied by strong drink. They too were religiously leading the people into making erroneous decisions and living unholy lives. Isaiah writes a deplorable picture of their banquet tables being full of filthy vomit. They were arrogant, and thus rejected the exhortations of Isaiah. Isaiah thus stood alone in the midst of religious leaders who preached for profit, and partied in lavish feasts during which they drank themselves senseless with strong drink. ***Precept upon precept:*** The people chided Isaiah for preaching the precepts of the law of God. They were morally liberal in declaring themselves free from the restrictions of the law that Isaiah proclaimed.

28:11-13 ***Foreign language:*** In the Hebrew text verse 11 is a series of monosyllables. Because of their apostasy, the time would come when they would be spoken to in monosyllables in captivity. They would be given commands from the Assyrians, and eventually, from the Babylonians. Since they would not listen to the precepts of God, they would have to listen to the commands of their captors.

28:14-19 ***Covenant:*** Hezekiah's officials were the scornful men. Regardless of their counsel, Judah could not make alliances with Egypt that would guard them from the Assyrians. Alliances with foreign nations could not save them. Making alliances with foreign nations was actually bargaining with death. These were alliances of lies. ***Cornerstone:*** If they trusted in God, and maintained the laws of the covenant that He had made with them, then they would have a sure foundation upon which to stand. They were already in an alliance with God, and thus they should trust in this alliance instead of the alliances they were making with foreign powers. ***Measuring line ... plummet:*** God's will is the standard by which they were to be determined faithful. As a builder uses a measuring line and plummet to determine whether a building is constructed properly, so God's word determines the moral standing of His people. ***Covenant with death:*** Regardless of Judah's courtship with Egypt, Assyria would ravage the countryside and depopulate the land of Palestine with death and captivity. Only Jerusalem would remain unconquered.

28:20-22 ***Bed:*** Verse 20 was a proverb quoted by Isaiah to remind Hezekiah and his officials that his bed that he made with Egypt will be too short in which to sleep, and the

blanket too narrow into which to wrap himself. ***His awesome work:*** Their lack of trust in God had driven God to align with foreign nations in order to bring judgment upon His people. They had scoffed at God's alliance (covenant) with them, and thus increased their bondage to those nations with whom they made alliances. ***Perazim:*** See 2 Sm 5:20; 1 Ch 14:11. David destroyed the army of the Philistines, and thus destroyed any who would stand in his way to carry out God's purpose for the existence of Israel. Their attempt to guard themselves from the threat of the Assyrians agitated God to increase their calamity.

28:23-29 This parable reveals God's purpose and measure of chastisement. There will be chastisement, but it will be measured in order not to annihilate His people. The work of the farmer in farming the land comes in stages. He does not plant while he is plowing. There is a designated time for each action of farming in order to bring about the desired crop. At this time in the history of Israel, it was a time for pruning (captivity). After the plowing there would eventually come the time to bring forth the repentant remnant. The remnant would be the seed in Israel from which the Messiah and Savior of the world would eventually come.

Chapter 29
WOE TO DECEIVERS

29:1-4 ***Ariel:*** There is a play on words in the Hebrew of this context. The word *ir-el* is Jerusalem, the "city of God." Though she is *Ari-El*, the "lion of God," Jerusalem will become *Ariel*, the "altar-hearth of God." Because of her apostasy from trusting in God, she would eventually be reduced because of God's consuming hearth of fire. God would camp against the city, bring it to ruins, and then its voice would be like the voice of a ghost speaking from the earth. Its ruins and dust would say that there was a great city here, but now it is deserted. ***Whisper from the dust:*** As one would whisper a sound in the last moments before death, so Jerusalem would whisper its existence to mankind before being destroyed. No one would hear and come to her rescue.

29:5-8 In the context of the preceding pronouncement of judgment in verses 1-4 comes a note of encouragement concerning the enemies of Jerusalem. Though they are used as God's proxy to bring judgment on Jerusalem, they will be blown away as dust. In one night, God sent forth His Angel to kill 185,000 of the Assyrians who had camped against Jerusalem (37:35-38; 2 Kg 19:35-37).

29:9-12 The prophets and seers, who should have been preaching to the people what was to come, were blinded. Both they and the people to whom they preached were blinded. What God would do to the Assyrians could not have been predicted. It could only have been prophesied by the inspiration of God's true prophet. Their prophets and seers were incapable of foreseeing the calamity to come, and thus they could not speak of that which was to come. They were false prophets. These prophets could not read the signs of the times, for they were spiritually illiterate.

29:13,14 These are profound words for every preacher who would presume to foretell the future. What God stated through Isaiah was contrary to what everyone expected (Compare 28:21; Dt 28:58,59). It was an awesome event that was beyond the ability of men to predict. Their false preachers and seers proclaimed to be able to foretell the future, but what would happen would identify them to be fake prophets who preached only for gain. Because their hearts were far from God, they preached the commandments of men (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

29:15-24 ***Hide their counsel:*** The leaders presumed that they could hide their counsel from God. Their thoughts could not be hidden from God. They had created a god in their thinking from which they could conceal themselves. They had forgotten that their Creator was omniscient and the eternal sovereign over all things. ***Lebanon will be turned into a fruitful field:*** Through the chastisement to come, Jerusalem, and Israel in general, would be pruned. And because of the pruning, the nation would once again be productive. They would be cleansed of the ruthless people among them, those who perverted justice and oppressed the poor. ***Not now be ashamed:*** In their purging, the remnant would come forth without shame. As a nation taken through the purging fires of trial, Isaiah speaks of a time when they would come forth a reverent people who will never again turn to gods they had created after their own imaginations. Once they have been purged, they would then appreciate their covenant with God. They would better understand that as a nation of people, God had greater things for them in the future. They must remember that Blessing who was yet to come.

Chapter 30
A COVENANT WITH EGYPT

30:1-5 Unfortunately, instead of trusting in God, Judah went to Egypt in order to form an alliance against the Assyrians. In doing this, they were rebellious against the protection of God and ignored His protecting hand. Because they did not consult God in this matter, they added sin to sin. ***Cover with a covering:*** To make a treaty or alliance. ***Shadow:*** A cover of protection. They put Egypt before God.

30:6,7 Their tribute that they paid to Egypt for an alliance would not profit them against the Assyrians. ***Rahab:*** This is probably a reference to the sluggish hippopotamus. Egypt sits in her domain, but responds slowly to the needs of others. Any alliance with her would result in no help for Judah.

30:8-11 When Judah refused to be directed by God, they sought to devise their own means of deliverance. This was a time in Judah when they had long forsaken their trust in God to deliver them as in the days of the judges. They were thus rebellious in that they would not listen to the word coming from the mouth of Isaiah. They were antagonistic to whatever Isaiah preached.

30:12-14 Their trust in alliances with another nation would eventually break down when God intended to take them into captivity. No work among men can stand against the work of God through the nations. The wall of Judah's alliances would break and never be restored.

30:15-17 ***By returning:*** This was Isaiah's plea for a recall of the emissaries to Egypt. Only in returning to God, and trust-

ing in Him for deliverance, would Judah be delivered from the Assyrians. They must remain silent, and then watch for the deliverance of God. Those who opposed Isaiah replied that they would trust in Egypt's swift horses in order to flee. But Isaiah replied that their enemies would ride on swifter horses, and eventually overtake them. Only a small remnant would be spared in order to be a beacon for the existence of Israel.

JUDAH DELIVERED FROM ASSYRIA

30:18-22 God is just, and thus He is on His throne, awaiting the time when He will intervene for His people. ***Your Teacher:*** God will be heard by His students simply because they will have been pruned of their dull hearing. They will be instructed because they will listen. The result will be that they will throw away their idols that they created in order to have other gods before them.

30:23-26 In contrast to the famine that God brought on them in order that they repent, after their repentance He would restore the prosperity of the land. The moon would shine as the sun, and the sun would shine with perfect brightness.

30:27-33 The destruction of the Assyrians at the gate of Jerusalem would be the manifestation of the judgment of God that He renders to every nation that sets itself against the people of God. Because of their lack of fear of God, Judah's enemies manifested their arrogance by setting themselves against God's people. After the strong arm of the Lord had descended and shattered the enemies of Judah, the people would come in procession with the playing of the flute in order to praise God. ***Tophet:*** Literally, "the place of burning." The picture is probably of Israel's cremation of the 185,000 Assyrians whom God killed. They were burned in the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) outside the walls of Jerusalem. This burning of bodies defined what later would be the meaning of Gehenna that was used by Jesus throughout His ministry (See Mt 5:22,29,30).

Chapter 31
CALAMITY FOR TRUSTING IN EGYPT

31:1-3 Judah sought to procure horses and chariots from Egypt in order to fight against the Assyrians. But trusting in the inventions of man in order to fight against the purpose of God would only prove futile. The leaders of Judah thought they were wise in seeking help from Egypt. But their wisdom would be turned to foolishness by the wisdom of God. What would transpire was that both the Egyptians and Judah would fall in order to manifest the strength of God.

31:4-9 The Lord is the lion who will not be disturbed by the Assyrians' cry against the city of Jerusalem. Regardless of the Assyrians' taunting of the Jews at the city wall, God would come upon them as a lion upon its prey. ***Turn to Him:*** God called on the leaders of Judah to turn from their political efforts of trusting in themselves and Egypt. As proof of their repentance, they were to cast away their idols. ***Sword not of man:*** This was a prophecy that the Assyrians would not die in a battle between armies. However, the remnants of the army would flee as from a battle. The fact that the people to whom Isaiah spoke these words did not understand, meant that they would learn from the fulfillment of this prophecy, which fulfillment was calamity. ***Furnace in Jerusalem:*** The arrogance of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, led him to believe that he could take Jerusalem. Jerusalem thus became the occasion for God to bring judgment upon him. For Sennacherib, Jerusalem became a consuming fire that devoured his army. His failure to take the city became the evidence that Isaiah was the true prophet of God. He was not of the false prophets who were saying that Judah would not be ravaged.

Chapter 32
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND REPENTANCE

32:1-8 It seems that Isaiah wanted to remind the Jews of what it was like in the land before they allowed sin to change their culture. He is looking to the future by painting a picture of a restoration to the glory of their former years. In the social environment of the restored society to come, they would be able to distinguish between right and wrong. ***King:*** There is at least a picture here of the church to come, wherein the righteous would dwell under the kingship of Jesus. ***As a refuge:*** The character of the new citizens will be changed. They would no longer be oppressors, but individuals of the new citizenship that would be a refuge, shield, and place of compassion and comfort for those seeking God. ***Eyes ... see:*** The new social order would be of those who truly discern the character of a righteous person. Because they have obeyed the will of the Lord, they will be able to discern the character of others according to the will of the Lord. Contrary to the fool, whose discernment is twisted, the true character of the obedient will be manifested by one exercising prudent judgment and spiritual relationships with others. They will determine noble plans, and then not waver from their stand for righteousness.

32:9-15 In view of the impending danger, it seems that the women of Jerusalem were caught up in the luxury of their material living. ***Vintage will fail:*** In about one year from this prophecy, troubles would begin for Jerusalem. There would be no second year crop. Isaiah called on them to strip off their luxurious garments and put on clothes that manifested mourning. Not long in the future their palaces would be empty and the land left to briers and thorns. ***Until the Spirit is poured out:*** This statement corresponds with Joel 2:28-32. Peter quoted Joel 2 in Acts 2:16-21. We would conclude that Isaiah and Joel were speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in order to initiate the beginning of the church in A.D. 30. The word "until" in verse 15, therefore, infers that the desolation would continue until this date. There would be a remnant that would return, but it would never be as it was when Israel first possessed the land. But in the fulfillment of what Isaiah says, the restoration is not a restoration of crops, but a spiritual restoration known as the church of the living God.

32:16-20 Since this would be the time of the reign of the Messiah, then what is pictured is a metaphorical environment of peace. Righteousness would be cultivated. Peace produced. Though God would continue to bring judgments in time on those who would be the enemies of His people, at the same time He would provide security and protection for them.

Chapter 33
DOOM OF ASSYRIA

The historical background of this chapter is possibly when tribute was sent from Jerusalem to Sennacherib in Lachish in order to stop his attack of Jerusalem (See 2 Kg 18). Sennacherib took the tribute, but demanded the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem. He is thus identified as the treacherous one.

33:1-6 Sennacherib dealt treacherously with the leaders of Jerusalem. Though he had not yet had the opportunity to plunder Jerusalem, his time was coming to suffer the judgment of God. ***Lord be gracious:*** This is Isaiah's prayer that God be stirred, for when God is stirred, the nations flee. Since the treasure of Zion is righteousness, God will spare her.

33:7-13 ***Ambassadors of peace:*** Hezekiah's ambassadors that he sent to Sennacherib were treacherously betrayed by the Assyrian king. He did not honor his commitment to the agreement that was made. He took their tribute, and then demanded the surrender of the city. Sennacherib trampled down every city and refused to honor any commitments of peace. Hezekiah had submitted to the demands of Sennacherib by paying the tribute. Nevertheless, the Assyrian king wanted the total submission of the land of Palestine and all its treasures. ***Now I will rise:*** After Hezekiah and his officials had exhausted all their abilities to negotiate peace, it was time for God to take action. The fire of the Lord was kindled, and now was burning hot against the Assyrians for their demands that they had made on the city. The Assyrians had ravaged the land, destroying one city after another. But now it was time for them to reap what they had sown.

33:14-16 It was a time when the unrighteous in Jerusalem would be spared because they were in the company of the righteous. Those who were truly righteous dealt justly with others. They spoke honestly, despised extortion, refused bribes, would not listen to violence, or take pleasure in looking on evil. Because the righteous had committed themselves to the fear of the Lord, their defense was the Lord. Their sustenance was guaranteed because they lived under the protection of the Lord.

33:17-24 Isaiah encouraged the people with a bright outcome of the gloomy circumstances that had been transpiring since the Assyrians entered Palestine. Hezekiah was in sackcloth, mourning both for his predicament and for the destruction of the cities of Judah. ***Meditate on terror:*** As the Assyrians hurled insults at the people, those who had counted out tribute to the Assyrians had failed. Those who depended on their defense by counting the towers of the wall, would also fail, for no tower of defense is needed when God goes to work for His people. ***You will not see a fierce people:*** God took care of the Assyrians. The people were delivered from having to listen to commands from those who spoke a foreign language. God swept through the Assyrian army, killing 185,000 in one night. Peace was brought to the people in Jerusalem when the Assyrians slept the peace of death. ***A tabernacle that will not be taken down:*** Jerusalem was not destroyed. ***Wherein will go no boat:*** No enemy of Judah will be allowed to launch against God's tabernacle, for the Lord is its ruler and king. ***Your tackle hangs slack:*** Though old and ragged, there will be better days for Zion. Instead of being plundered, the lame Zion would eventually plunder from those who sought to plunder the city.

Chapter 34
GOD'S VENGEANCE

Seated in the immediate aftermath of God's judgment on the Assyrians with the death of 185,000 soldiers outside the walls of Jerusalem, the general historical setting of the judgment prophecies of chapters 34 & 35 is God's condemnation of the nations that have raised their hands against Him and His purpose with His people. As the delivered Israelites looked on the dead bodies of the Assyrians, it was a time for Isaiah to take the minds of the people to the final judgment that was yet in the future. The immediate events established the earthly and literal definition of the metaphor that was used for the final condemnation. Now the people needed to look into the future to the final destination of the unrighteous. From the prophecies of the preceding chapters, God here brings judgment on the wicked in order to redeem the righteous. Chapter 34 takes the judgment scene beyond the immediate historical context to the final judgment of all the wicked. The comfort that is revealed in chapter 35 is the final redemption of the righteous from a wicked world.

34:1-4 ***Nations:*** The message is to all people of the world. All are called before the judgment court of God. ***Slain ... stench:*** One can only imagine the horrific sight the delivered Israelites saw the morning after the Angel passed over the Assyrian army. There were 185,000 dead bodies in the area around Jerusalem. When the Jews emerged from the city, they had to burn the bodies. However, they began to stink before they could burn them. It was certainly a horrible experience, but one that established the definition of the metaphor that would define the eternal condemnation that is to come on the wicked (See 2 Th 1:6-9). The burning of the bodies was completed, but the result of their destruction was forever. ***Hosts of heaven:*** See 2 Pt 3:10-12.

34:5-7 ***Bathed in heaven:*** God's judgment sword is tempered into steel when placed in water after being heated. ***Idumea:*** Or, Edom. The sword of the Lord is now turned with vengeance against Edom. The Edomites had persecuted Israel when they came from Egyptian captivity. It was now time for their judgment. ***Bozrah:*** The primary stronghold of Edom in its north, bordering southern Palestine. ***Wild oxen ... young bulls ... bulls:*** All the government officials of Edom will come down to judgment.

34:8-15 ***Vengeance ... recompenses:*** Vengeance belongs to the Lord. And this was a time for vengeance against all those who would set themselves in wickedness against the people of God. All those nations throughout history that fought against Israel throughout her years of decline and captivity would be brought down to judgment. ***Not be quenched:*** Though taken from the most horrible thing man could experience on earth, the metaphorical meaning would intensify in reference to eternal judgment. It would intensify, not in reference to burning heat, but in the fact that one would be destroyed from the presence of God (Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:6-9). ***Forever:*** The destruc-

tion would be complete, with consequences that would not be changed. The meaning is not that the process of destroying would continue without end, but that which is destroyed will not be brought back into existence. Once the persecuting nations of Israel were destroyed, they would not be brought back into existence. The central theme of the prophecy is that the enemies of Israel were annihilated from history, whereas the nation of Israel was restored to existence.

34:16,17 As every creature has his or her mate, so the mate of prophecy is fulfillment. What Isaiah has written in the scroll will be fulfilled. Thus one purpose for the writing of prophecy was that we the readers might have evidence of the fact that the prophecy was accurately made and accurately fulfilled. One of the greatest documents that proves the inspiration of the Bible is the book of Isaiah. Except for the final resurrection and judgment, every prophecy that was made in the book has already been fulfilled. Because all the prophecies of events in time have been fulfilled, we know that God will fulfill the prophecies of the final resurrection and judgment that are yet to come.

Chapter 35
THE REMNANT & RESTORATION

35:1-10 This is a beautiful picture of God's redemption. Because of their apostasy, God had ravaged the land of Palestine with drought and famine, and also with the armies of Assyria and Babylonia. It was now time for redemption and restoration. New life would come into the land. God's people would be coming home. They would be coming home to the sweet smelling blossoms of lilies, irises and tulips that would transform their waste land into a paradise. They would again smell the fragrance of the cedars of Lebanon. Isaiah's picture of the restored land would strengthen the captives. The weak would be encouraged. The downhearted would be lifted up. The spiritually blind would see. Intimidated captives would sigh for joy. The lame would leap in rejoicing. The land that was once given over to wild animals would again be pasture for their flocks and cattle. ***Highway of Holiness:*** The roadway that led the captives back to the land of promise was cleared of wickedness, and those things that would lead one astray. It is a highway only for those who have committed themselves to the restoration of God's people (See comments Er & Ne). It is a roadway for the redeemed of God, those who have been sanctified. Though this prophecy was fulfilled when a remnant of the twelve tribes was restored to Canaan after the years of captivity, God's people, the redeemed and sanctified, are on a highway to heaven. They too are headed for a place of rest (See comments Hb 4).

Hezekiah's Reign
(36:1 – 39:8)

Outline: (1) Salvation of Jerusalem (36:1 – 37:38), (2) Illness and recovery of Hezekiah (38:1-22), (3) An ambassador from Babylon (39:1-8)

Chapter 36
SALVATION OF JERUSALEM

Historically, chapters 38 & 39 precede chapters 36 & 37 (See 2 Kg 18:13 – 20:18; 2 Ch 32). The setting for the following events is Sennacherib's effort to take Jerusalem in 701 B.C.

36:1-3 In this context it is stated that Sennacherib was launching an attack against Jerusalem for three reasons: (1) Hezekiah refused to pay tribute. (2) Hezekiah sought to make an alliance with Egypt and Babylon. (3) Hezekiah had supported the uprising of the Philistines against an Assyrian-appointed king. ***Rabshakeh:*** The name means "chief of the officers."

36:4-10 At the time, Sennacherib was laying siege to Lachish. He sent Rabshakeh to taunt the Jews who were held up in Jerusalem. Rabshakeh thus spoke in order to undermine the confidence of the Jews in reference to their trust in the Egyptians. He also sought to undermine their confidence by mocking the gods of the nations who had already been defeated by the Assyrians. Hezekiah had restored Judah by banishing idolatrous worship from the people. Rabshakeh thus reasoned that even the gods of the Jews could not deliver them, for Hezekiah had banished them from the land. Rabshakeh forgot that those gods were not the gods of Israel. There was only one God in Israel, and he would witness the power of this God with the death of his army.

36:11,12 The language of commerce at the time was Aramaic. Since Rabshakeh wanted to discourage the Jews, he communicated in the Jews' Hebrew language, the language that was spoken by all the Israelites.

36:13-20 Rabshakeh was seeking to generate a mutiny among Hezekiah's soldiers. His plea was that they would enjoy food and drink, and then go into a land that was as their homeland. Since Assyria had taken all the cities of Judah, he reasoned that even Jerusalem would fall.

36:21,22 The people remained loyal to Hezekiah, who was supported by Isaiah. Though the threats of Rabshakeh shook Eliakim, Shebna and Joah, they remained faithful to the words of Hezekiah and Isaiah.

Chapter 37

37:1-4 When Hezekiah heard the report of what Rabshakeh had said, he was humbled. He went to the only place where he could receive a divine answer for the dilemma of Judah. Judah had come to the point that only the king's faith in God would deliver them from the attack of Assyria. He had failed in all his plans to make alliances with Egypt and Babylon, and thus as a last resort, he went to God. Though they had failed to put God first in their initial defense against the Assyrians, God was delivering Jerusalem for a greater purpose. It was not in His plan at this time in history to take Judah into captivity.

37:5-7 The answer was quick and specific. Sennacherib would suffer the blast of the Lord, and a rumor. He would return home and be killed himself.

37:8-13 When Rabshakeh returned to Sennacherib, Sennacherib had moved the Assyrian army from Lachish to Libnah. There was an immediate threat by the king of Ethiopia, and thus he moved to face this threat. He then sent Rabshakeh back to Jerusalem in order to intimidate Hezekiah into surrendering. Rabshakeh's ultimatum was directed to Hezekiah,

reminding him that Assyria had already conquered many major cities. Hezekiah must not assume that he can withstand the Assyrian army.

37:14-20 Now that all else had failed, Hezekiah turned to God in humble prayer. When human wisdom and efforts are exhausted, only God can deliver. God allowed Hezekiah to come to this predicament in order that he be moved to the point of being on his knees before God. When considering all the facts, Hezekiah knew that Jerusalem could be delivered only if it were an act of God. If Jerusalem were delivered, then the nations who had been defeated by the Assyrians, would know that the God of Israel was the only true and living God. All the idol gods of the nations were only the invention of their imaginations. ***Cherubim:*** See Ex 25:21,22.

37:21-29 God took action because of Hezekiah's prayer. A nation was thus saved by the prayer of its leader. Verses 22-29 are a song of taunt against the arrogant Sennacherib. The song is a judgment against his arrogant presumption that he would raise a hand against the Creator of all things, and His daughter, Jerusalem. God reminded Sennacherib that he could not have done any of the things over which he boasted if God had not been working for him. Because he had acted so arrogantly, God would send him back to the place from which he came.

37:30-35 In a matter of one year the Assyrians would be gone from Judah. Farmers would be back in their fields and cultivating their land. After they had reaped the volunteer harvests, they would plant their own fields and harvest their crops. ***David's sake:*** It was not God's original plan when He brought Israel out of Egyptian captivity to select a permanent place for the ark of the covenant. The tabernacle was to be circulated throughout the territories of the tribes. But after five hundred years of existence in the land, and in the declining years of Israel in the land, God allowed David to select a place for the building of a temple. God gave David the concession to have the temple built, and thus the temple was built by Solomon because of David's desire. In this context, it is saved from destruction by God for the sake of David. However, when the Babylonians came in 586 B.C., the temple was destroyed.

37:36-38 The death of the enemies of Judah was also Judah's deliverance. ***Angel of the Lord:*** The Hebrew phrase that is used here would make this a reference to the preincarnate Christ. Verse 38 was possibly later added to the text by a disciple of Isaiah, for Sennacherib lived another sixteen years after he had departed and returned to Nineveh. Isaiah's prophecy of his death was fulfilled, but not immediately upon his return to Nineveh.

Chapter 38
ILLNESS & RECOVERY OF HEZEKIAH

38:1-3 See 2 Kg 20:1-21; 2 Ch 32:24-33. This event preceded the attack of Sennacherib against Jerusalem, and is placed here, with chapter 39, to introduce the content of chapters 40-66. Hezekiah was probably 38 years old when Isaiah told him to put his house in order. At this time he had no children, and thus the Davidic seedline was in danger. Hezekiah had accomplished many reforms in Judah, but his works of restoration were no guarantee against death. He was not being punished because he was a wicked king, nor was he to be saved from death because of righteous deeds. In his prayer, Hezekiah humbled himself before God, for he believed the pronouncement of Isaiah concerning his death.

38:4-8 ***I have heard your prayer:*** God will answer our prayers when we ask according to His will and work. In this case, God worked in the body of Hezekiah in order to restore it to health. No visible miracle was performed, but God worked against nature in order to restore the cells of his body in order that he not die (See comments Js 5:13-18). ***I will defend this city:*** God would defend the city against the attack of Sennacherib. ***Sign to you:*** The process of healing would take time as God assisted the natural body processes to bring health to Hezekiah. Until he was healed, God knew that Hezekiah needed reassurance that he would not die. ***Shadow on the stairway:*** See 2 Kg 20:9-11. More recent translations do not use the word "degrees" in reference to the movement of the sun, since measurements in time were not calculated in degrees in ancient Israel.

38:9-20 These words are Hezekiah's song of pleading for life, and an expression of gratitude for God's deliverance. He was in anguish, feeling that his life was cut off before he could accomplish his destiny in life. He believed that if God were to be the foundation of his life and mission, then God would give him a longer life. God responded to his plea, and thus Hezekiah concluded that his ordeal in being delivered by God from the natural laws of sickness was God's sign to him that he was a redeemed person in the eyes of God. Since God spared him, he assumed that God had greater things for him to do. And in view of the historical context, God knew that His people needed Hezekiah's leadership in a time of national crisis that was brought on by the Assyrian threat.

38:21,22 ***Lump of figs:*** We are not told if this was simply a sign for accepting the healing of God, or that it was believed that the lump of figs had some medicinal power. ***Boil:*** We are also not told exactly what the sickness was. We do see in these verses that all that could be done medically, was done. The true healing, however, was accomplished by God.

Chapter 39
AN AMBASSADOR FROM BABYLON

39:1,2 Hezekiah was not without flaws. When the king of Babylon sent a gift to him, he allowed his pride in the riches of Judah to cloud his judgment. He thus revealed to the messengers of Merodachbaladan the national treasures of Judah. His pride in the riches of Judah would eventually be the bait that would draw the Babylonians to Judah's gate about one hundred years from the time of Hezekiah's death. At that time Jerusalem would fall to Babylon in 586 B.C. ***Sick ... recovered:*** Merodachbaladan wanted to know of the recovery of Hezekiah and the great wonder that had occurred concerning the turning back of the shadow of the sun (See 2 Ch 32:31). However, his ulterior motives were possibly in reference to spying out the land. We might assume that the emissaries asked to see the wealth of Judah. Because Hezekiah was seeking their favor in order to have Babylon's protection against the Assyrians, he submitted to their request. Hezekiah pos-

sibly wanted the Babylonians to know that Judah had a great deal to offer in exchange for an alliance with Babylon.

39:3-8 Isaiah assumed correctly, that Hezekiah was working an alliance deal with Babylon in order to play politics for the deliverance of Jerusalem. He had done this with Egypt, and now he was doing it with Babylon. But because he did not trust totally in the Lord, Judah would pay the price for his lack of discretion. Eventually, the treasures of Jerusalem would be taken to Babylon. ***Good is the word of the Lord:*** This could have been a resolve by Hezekiah to relinquish to the judgment that God had pronounced. Or, it could have been that Hezekiah was relieved that he would not in his lifetime experience the calamity that would eventually come on Judah for their apostasy. We must keep in mind that Judah and Jerusalem would eventually fall to Babylon. They would not fall because Hezekiah had shown the Babylonian emissaries the treasures of Jerusalem, but because of their own apostasy from God. Isaiah simply revealed here that one of the reasons the Babylonians would come would be to relieve Jerusalem of all her treasures. But the real reason they would be coming was that God would be using Babylon to bring judgment upon Jerusalem for her apostasy.

Consolation For The Exiles
(40:1 – 48:22)

Outline: (1) God comforts (40:1-31), (2) The power of prophecy (41:1-29), (3) Redemption of God's people (42:1 – 43:28), (4) Futility of idolatry (44:1-23), (5) Prophecy of Cyrus (44:24 – 45:25), (6) Overthrow of Babylon (46:1 – 47:15), (7) Rebuke of the unfaithful (48:1-22)

Chapter 40
GOD COMFORTS

The historical background of the chapters that follow is Judah's relief from the threat of destruction by the Assyrians. Beginning with this chapter, God reveals through Isaiah some of the most profound teaching of the Old Testament concerning His plan for the redemption of man. These chapters can be grouped in three divisions that reveal the following general themes: (1) The sovereignty of God over all creation, (2) the redemptive work of God for His people, and (3) the glory of the last days for the redeemed. While living in Palestine, Isaiah is taken by the Spirit through inspiration to the time when the Israelites would be living in captivity. But while in captivity, the people are given encouragement to believe in the great things that God had yet to accomplish through Israel.

40:1,2 An introduction is made here to all the proclamations that follow and continue to the end of the book. This is the voice of God who proclaims grace to the people. Israel's captivity is ended because the people have been purged of sin. It is now a time for comfort that will bring joy. It was a time for God's people to rejoice over their future. ***My people:*** See Ex 19:5,6; Lv 20:6; Dt 7:6; 14:2. They were once rejected as God's people, but now they are again claimed because of His covenant relationship with them (Hs 1:9).

40:3-5 The call came from the desert while they were in captivity in Assyria and Babylonia, the places to which they had been taken captive. The way was to be made easy for them to return. The revealing of the glory of the Lord meant the salvation of His people.

40:6-8 Isaiah heard a voice that commanded him to preach a message of comfort. What he was to proclaim was the frailty of man, and thus man's necessity to depend on God. And because man is so frail, he has no right to claim deliverance by his own powers. God is eternal. His word is eternal. The eternal existence of frail man depends entirely on man being in the presence of God (Compare comments 2 Th 1:6-9). ***The Lord blows:*** When God breathes on anything of His creation, it will wither or vanish away in an instant.

40:9-11 In the restoration, God will once again rule among His people from heaven. They will no longer seek a king to rule over them on earth. The good news would go from Jerusalem, and thus Jerusalem is personified to be the proclaimer of joy (See Is 2:1-3). The nature of the news was that it was good in reference to all men. Therefore, the news must be proclaimed. Isaiah's mission was not just to the cities of Judah, but to the whole world. The message was that God was coming. He was coming to accomplish His purpose on earth. The fulfillment of God's purpose for the existence of the world would not be deterred by anything that man could do. He would come to manifest His kingdom reign, regardless of the desires of men (See Jn 1:11). He would thus come with strength and gentleness. His strength would be toward those who rejected His work. His gentleness would be revealed to those who submitted to His word. He would protect and nurture the obedient, for they would be His sheep.

40:12-17 God can do what He desires and fulfill His promises because He is God. He is the creator of all things, and thus all things are under His control. No man, by use of man's standards of measuring, can compare with God who has determined the exactness of all that He created. These words chide those who would create false gods after the measurement of the abilities of men, and then exalt their creations to the place of God. The wisdom of God is incomprehensible, and thus cannot be compared with the greatest wisdom of man. Who, therefore, could give instruction to the Holy Spirit? One is doing just this when he seeks to create a god after his own imagination. ***Drop ... dust:*** The most powerful nations of the world are only a single drop from a rain cloud. They are only a small particle of dust on a balance, and thus in no way affect the measurement of humanity. All the cedars of Lebanon could not build a fire large enough to offer all the animals of the country for a sufficient burnt offering to the Lord. Forgiveness does not come from offerings, but from grace.

40:18-20 It would be only awesome ignorance on the part of a person to consider himself something in comparison to the awesome God of the universe. The foolishness of idolatry is revealed in the fact that men seek to compare themselves with the incomprehensible God. The rich may use precious metals to form idols. The poor may use hard wood. Both can never use the imagination of men to form a representation of God, who is spirit (Jn 4:24; see At 17:29).

40:21-24 The created world is a better witness to the existence and power of God than all the institutions of man's wisdom (Ps 8; Rm 1:20). ***Circle:*** Long before scientists could

prove that the earth was circular, the prophet here mentions the spherical nature of the earth in a passing statement with reference to God's enthronement over all that He created. There are no other earths that embellish the grandeur of God, for this revelation is not of life on other planets. On this earth rulers come and go, but God continues to exist over all things (Jb 12:21; Ps 107:40). Those rulers who would presume that they are so important, are simply blown away by the breath of God.

40:25,26 God is omniscient concerning His creation. The ignorance of man is manifested in his efforts to create gods that might in some way illustrate the incomprehensible God of all things.

40:27-31 God is omnipresent, and thus no man can hide from His presence. The comfort for God's people is in the fact that though God may seem distant, He is actually close, for in Him we live, move and have our being (At 17:28). The bounds of God's comfort for His people are unlimited. He will not fail in giving strength to those who are downtrodden. Though men may grow weak, God's sustenance always abounds. Those who would wait for God to work in their lives will not be disappointed. They will be able to accomplish things beyond their dreams, for God is able to work in the lives of those who walk by faith (Ep 3:20,21).

Chapter 41
THE POWER OF PROPHECY

41:1-4 The content of this chapter continues the challenge of God to man. The challenge is to the unbelieving nations (islands, or coastlands) for a comparison between man's idolatrous gods and God's majesty. ***The righteous man:*** God raised up Abraham, and from his seed created a nation. God chose Abraham in order to fulfill a promise that in him all nations would be blessed (Gn 12:1-4). Israel was the nation through whom He would accomplish this eternal plan.

41:5-7 The nations witnessed the work of God through Israel. Israel could not have been born out of the captivity of Egypt without the direct work of God. Though other nations formed their gods, only Israel existed throughout history while other nations vanished from history. The gods of other nations fell, but the God of Israel continued to work through His people.

41:8-13 Because of what God had done in the past in the history of Israel, Israel was to be encouraged. The people were to be encouraged because God would continue to work through them until He had completed the destiny of Israel. ***Abraham My friend:*** See Js 2:23. ***Ends of the earth:*** Abraham was called in Ur of the Chaldees in order to come to the land that God would later give to his descendants. ***I have chosen you:*** God chose Abraham. Pagan nations chose their gods and formed them in stone, wood or gold according to their own imaginations. Abraham was chosen because of his faith. His choosing was conditioned on his faith, and thus he was made the father of our faith. Once chosen, God promised that He would be with Abraham and strengthen him. God's promise to sustain Abraham was continued through his posterity, for he sustained Israel until the coming of the Messiah. Those who would make war in order to bring God's covenanted people to destruction would not be successful, for God would fight for His people.

41:14-20 ***Sharp threshing instrument:*** Instead of being cut down by the nations, God's people are strong and invincible. They are the ones who will thresh the nations as a large stone grinds the grain. The truth that would eventually come from Israel would be the standard by which the nations would be judged. If other nations were not righteous, they would be judged. ***I will open rivers:*** The land will go from a wasteland wherein they suffered drought and famine, to a fertile land of rejoicing. Palestine would again become the land of milk and honey for the people of God. When they considered the transformation in lives and land, they would understand that it was the work of God who accomplished this awesome deed. Because Isaiah was writing during a time of national tragedy, it would have been difficult for the people to understand that these things would come to pass. Those who were shortsighted would possibly have concluded that after the siege of Sennacherib, all these things would be fulfilled. However, Isaiah was looking far beyond the Assyrian Empire. These events would happen over 150 years later. Their fulfillment would be encouragement for the returnees from captivity that God had truly been working through Isaiah for the benefit of His people.

41:21-24 God challenged the nations by challenging their gods. In challenging the false gods, He was challenging their imaginations, for their gods were only the figment of their imaginations. He first challenged them to think of some prophecy in the past that had been fulfilled. God had presented His case by giving the example of Abraham, that He had promised that from Abraham a great nation would come (Gn 12:1-3). ***Present your case:*** It was time for the false prophets of the false gods to prove themselves. ***Strong reasons:*** The proof of fulfilled prophecy must be beyond doubt. No obscure predictions and fulfillments will be accepted. Many seek to make predictions of the future, but prediction is based on known occurring events in the present. There are no hints in the making of a true prophecy. There were no hints that Judah would be delivered from the threat of Sennacherib. There was no indication that Jerusalem would fall over one hundred years later. There were no thoughts in the minds of the people that there would be a restoration of Israel to Palestine. In fact, all present events at the time of Isaiah were contrary to what Isaiah prophesied. Too many religionists seek to gain a following by their vain predictions and prognostications. ***He who chooses you is an abomination:*** Isaiah not only called the false prophets worthless, he also pronounced condemnation on those who believed their senseless predictions. It was because of the belief of the followers that the false prophets were able to continue. Those who reject the word of God in order to follow after those who are false prophets are an abomination to the Lord.

41:25-29 God ended with a final challenge. ***From the north:*** God had called Abraham and made of him a great nation. But those who would presume to prophesy the future are false simply because they presumptuously use the name of God in order to draw glory to themselves through their sup-

posed prophecy. But such people are all worthless. Those who would follow such people are victims of their own ignorance concerning true prophecy. ***A messenger of good news:*** Isaiah was the present messenger of good news to Jerusalem. Jerusalem would eventually be restored. In a time of national calamity, this was a message of hope. God gives the message of hope in the following chapter.

Chapter 42
REDEMPTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Chapter 40 spoke of God as the true God of all creation. Chapter 41 was a contrast between God and the gods that men create after their own image. This chapter speaks of God's suffering servant, the Messiah.

42:1-4 These verses speak of the character, or nature of the Servant. Though Israel may be the historical foundation upon which the statements of this chapter are made, what is revealed is One who is far beyond what is attainable by man. We would conclude, therefore, that Isaiah is looking far into the future, to a time when God would be revealed on earth through the incarnation of the Son. The Suffering Servant will be one who is tender and compassionate. He will draw all men to Himself. He will bring justice to the downtrodden. The Gentiles will seek His redemption.

42:5-9 God exalts the Servant to the One through whom God would establish a covenant with the people. He would be a light to the Gentiles, and in being a light to those in bondage, He would give freedom (Jn 8:32-36). He would thus have a redemptive mission to all nations. ***The former things:*** All that God had prophesied through the prophets concerning things that would come to pass in Isaiah's day had already come to pass. Therefore, what God was prophesying at this time through Isaiah concerning the future, would certainly come to pass.

42:10-13 A new song is needed for God because He is doing new things. Since we would view this context as Messianic, then certainly a new song is needed for the praise of God's salvational work among men through the Messiah. ***Kedar:*** Even the marauding Arabs of Kedar should sing in jubilation, shouting the praises of God from the highest mountains. ***The rock:*** Reference is to Petra, the capital of the Edomites. The picture is that Isaiah, as he gives this prophecy, is located in Palestine, not in the flatlands of Babylon.

42:14-17 God will be as a warrior whose rage is stirred up. He will go forth from His restraint and bring judgment on the wicked and justice for the righteous. Those who were spiritually blind will see His grace. Those who trusted in idols will be shamed. After Israel returned from captivity, they never again looked to any idols. Idolatry was purged from their culture.

42:18-20 At the time of Isaiah's ministry, Israel was blinded to God because of their own desire to turn away from His word (See Rm 11:25). Israel was the blinded servant. She was blinded above all because of the great things that God had done for her throughout her history. She had all the opportunity to witness the direct work of God in the life of the nation, but she turned away to be her own master.

42:21-25 Three centuries before the end of Israel, God was disciplining both the northern and southern kingdoms for their apostasy to walk according to their own moral laws. They remained blinded to His discipline, for they did not realize that the calamity they were experiencing was brought on them by God. They were aloof to the fact that God was seeking to turn them back. They went so far into apostasy from God that they would not listen to the prophets of God who were sent to call for their repentance. However, they needed to recognize that all their calamities were sent from God. They were not simply the victims of kingdom builders as the Assyrians and Babylonians. These nations were sent by God to stir them to repentance. They failed to see the chastening hand of God working through these nations. In order to understand their move away from God, we must keep in mind that they turned away from the word of God (See comments Hs 4:6). They became a godless nation that had forgotten their origins, and the God who had given them birth and preserved them throughout their history.

Chapter 43

43:1-7 All Israel will be called back by God to the land of Palestine. Reference is specifically to the restoration of the remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel who would be allowed to return to their land after the Babylonian captivity (See comments Er & Ne). God specifically called them out of captivity by their name. They were His people, and thus the prophecy was specific. The prophecy specifically referred to Israel, and thus we would not assume that the historical fulfillment of the call was to all nations. ***Water ... river ... fire:*** No natural dangers would hinder them from returning from captivity. ***Egypt ... Ethiopia ... Seba:*** God gave these nations as a ransom for the salvation of Jerusalem. Sennacherib focused his military energies on these nations, while sending a part of his army to Jerusalem. ***I will give men:*** Since God was working through Israel in order to bring the Messiah, and Savior, into the world, He would have given the rest of the world in order to save Jerusalem. He would have done this, because without Israel, the promises would not have been fulfilled through Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). By preserving Israel for the purpose of saving the world, God must be glorified. Israel must understand that she was saved, not because of her own worth, but because of God's eternal plan through the nation.

43:8-13 This profound challenge calls on man to bring forth their prophecies in order that they be compared with God's fulfilled prophecy concerning Israel. The existence of Israel throughout the centuries was evidence that God was working through the nation. Israel could not have been born as a nation without the help of God. The nation could not have been sustained throughout history unless God was preserving the people for a greater purpose. They could never have come back from captivity unless God had released them. The birth, preservation and continuation of the nation of Israel is one of the greatest evidences for the existence of God and His work among men.

43:14,15 God brought down the Babylonian Empire in order that the Medo-Persian Empire, through King Cyrus, allow Israel to be restored to the land of promise.

43:16-21 ***Sea ... chariot ... army:*** The same God who parted the Red Sea, and then closed it upon the army of Pharaoh when Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity, will again work to bring Israel out of Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. As God snuffed out the power of Pharaoh, so He will take away the power of these two empires who had taken His people into captivity. ***A new thing:*** God dried up the waters in order that they be delivered from Egypt. Now He will supply water in order that they be able to cross the desert from the captivity of Babylon to the freedom of their promised land. God created a highway out of Egypt. He will create another highway out of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. ***Formed for Myself:*** Israel was not created for the purpose of simply establishing another nation on earth. The nation was for His purpose of bringing the incarnation of Himself into the world through Jesus.

43:22-24 This is a picture of grace. Though Israel did not seek God, He continued His work through them as a nation. They had not earned their deliverance, but He gave it to them in order to fulfill His promises to the fathers. They were totally undeserving of the grace that was given in order that they continue as a nation.

43:25-28 The Israelites went into apostasy because they sought to satisfy their own worldly ambitions. They had forgotten that they were born as a nation through the grace of God. They were sustained by His grace. In order that they continue throughout history for the coming of the Messiah, their restoration to the land after the captivities was a sign that God had forgiven them.

Chapter 44

FUTILITY OF IDOLATRY

This is a profound text in reference to beliefs in spooks and spirits that are the product of man's imaginations. Those who would mold their fears into fetishes and charms around supposed evil forces of the spirit world should take a good look at how God mocks such creations of the minds and hands of men. When the truth of God's word is preached to a culture, it requires a long period of time through aggressive teaching of the word of God to eradicate spiritualistic beliefs from a culture. God sent Israel into three generations of captivity in order to accomplish this emotional and psychological transformation. He did not bring them back from captivity until the mysticism was gone from their thinking. The first captives returned in 536 B.C., and the last group almost a hundred years later under the direction of Nehemiah. But when they returned, faith in witches and mediums no longer existed in Israel. Those who foster such beliefs today only keep people in the bondage of their own minds. God mocks such beliefs in this text. All Christians would do well to take heed lest they be led astray into the captivity of their own imagination.

44:1-5 ***Jeshuran:*** This term is used as a diminutive word of endearment. It means "upright one." God had given His people over for judgment in order to move them to repentance. He now comforts them by reminding them that He will bring them back because of their repentance. They must not fear, for He will preserve them for a spiritual posterity that is coming in the future. ***Pour My Spirit:*** This would be the true Spirit, not a fictitious spirit or spook that the idolaters had created because of their own ignorance of the word of God. Since this would be a reference to the same outpouring that is mentioned in Joel 2:28, then we would assume that Isaiah is also speaking of the time when this prophecy would be fulfilled. Peter quoted Joel 2:28 in order to remind those on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 that the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit was fulfilled when the Spirit was poured out on the apostles (At 2:16,17). It would be and was a time when God's people would not be ashamed to be His people (Rm 1:16). As a result of the outpouring, new converts would arise to be a part of God's people. There would be conversions from all the nations (See Mk 16:15,16; At 2:41).

44:6-8 The gods who are the imaginations of men can never be compared to the God of Israel who declares the future. God had given birth to Israel, and preserved her to the time of Isaiah. From that time forward, God had prophesied a glorious future, and thus Israel must not fear the imaginations of those who speak contrary to God's message.

44:9-17 In this section of Scripture, God proclaimed the utter foolishness of man in his efforts to make idols that represent fictitious gods. God created man a religious being. But when this religious being forsakes the word of God, he will imagine spirits and spooks by which he will control his own life by living according to his own self-imposed religiosity. He will create in his mind spirit beings that do not exist. He will do this to the exclusion of God. His belief in his own spirits will be so great that he will argue with others that they are real, and can affect man with calamity. Those who would believe that the spirit inventions of men have affect over the physical world in which man lives should read carefully these verses. God chides those who have foolishly allowed themselves to believe in that which does not exist.

44:18-20 Wooden idols are good only for wood to cook food and keep one warm. ***He has shut their eyes:*** God will allow one to believe a lie, but condemn him for his desire to believe the lie (2 Th 2:11,12). Because the deceived had no desire to believe the truth, they will be condemned for their desire to follow after their own deceptions.

44:21-23 God's people must remember that they are the product of God, not the product of their own invention. Idolatry is humanism in that man seeks to be the center of his own power. He seeks to focus on no other existence outside himself. The evolutionist, therefore, is a narcissistic humanist in that he seeks to make himself the center of his own existence and destiny. ***I have blotted out:*** The occasion of Israel's restoration to the land of Palestine was an indication that God had forgiven them of their foolish idolatry. The fact that He worked among the nations in order that they return to the land was evidence of His forgiveness of their apostasy. All those who realize their forgiveness in Jesus, work in thanksgiving and rejoice because of the grace of God (See comments 2 Co 4:15).

PROPHECY OF CYRUS

44:24-28 ***Redeemer:*** God would deliver them from the captivity of which they could not deliver themselves. He was

the one who made Israel from the seed of Abraham, and He was the one who would preserve Israel for the coming of the Messiah. All such working in the history of Israel confounded those who believed in idols, which idols were lies that the apostates desired to believe. ***Jerusalem ... will be inhabited:*** Against the background of the destruction by Sennacherib, and eventually by the Babylonians, Jerusalem will be rebuilt. The prophecy was made long before the city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. ***Says to the deep:*** If God dried up the Red Sea in order to free Israel from Egyptian captivity, then surely He will deliver Israel from Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. ***Cyrus:*** This prophecy is so profound that liberal Bible students have often stated that Isaiah's prophecy was actually made during the time when Israel was in the land of their captivity. But when God inspired prophecy to be made, there was no need to dodge the impact of the mention of a king in history that was made over a century before he lived (45:21; see comments Er & Ne).

Chapter 45

This chapter presents the literal and earthly foundation upon which a metaphor of salvation is given for the spiritual Israel of God, the church. Cyrus was the "anointed" of God to bring national salvation to the Israelites by allowing them to return to their homeland of Palestine. The Messiah of the future would be the anointed one of God who would release those who are in the bondage of sin. In their release from sin, they would become the spiritual Israel of God, the church.

45:1-8 Cyrus would be the Medo-Persian king who would allow the captives to return to the land of Palestine. His name is identified for the purpose of witnessing to all men that it was God who was working through the nations on behalf of His people. Cyrus was anointed by God in order that we understand that He raised up Cyrus for a special purpose. The Medo-Persian Empire became a massive empire. From its beginnings of the old Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, it reached west to the Mediterranean Sea and south to the border of Egypt, thus encompassing all of Palestine. What actually took place when the Jewish captives returned to Palestine was that they resettled from one part of the Medo-Persian Empire to another region of the empire which was still under Medo-Persian control. Cyrus was allowed to conquer the armies to the west of Nineveh and Babylon in order to make it possible for God's people to resettle in the land of their heritage (See comments Er & Ne). They simply resettled in another region of the Medo-Persian Empire ***Gates:*** This was the most fortified part of the city, for it was the entrance into all ancient cities. They were built of wood, and often overlaid with brass. When the gates were broken, the city fell. ***No God besides Me:*** This theme permeates all prophecies that refer to the restoration of Israel to Palestine. God's work through the restoration was to prove that He was working with His people. Conquered and enslaved people were often simply assimilated into the life and societies of those nations who conquered them. But in Israel's case, they maintained their identity within the societies of their captors, and thus they were the true Israel when God returned them to Palestine. They maintained their national purity when they returned in order that they be identified as the Israel of God when the Messiah came in fulfillment of the promises to the fathers (Gn 12:1-2; see comments Er 10). All these things were done in order to prove that there is only one God who can do all these things among the nations of the world.

45:9,10 Man cannot change the eternal plan of God by following after his own will. Only idolaters seek to do this with their idol gods. But God works His plans, to which plans all men must submit.

45:11-13 Cyrus was a humanitarian king. He allowed people to return to their own homelands. God raised him up to accomplish this work in reference to the Israelites. When Cyrus allowed the Israelites to return to Palestine, it was not for the purpose of reaping tribute from them. Allowing the Israelites to relocate within the Medo-Persian Empire was not an economic plan to profit the empire.

45:14-17 Israel was disgraced and shamed when they blasphemed God through idolatry. The nations accused that the God of Israel was no greater than the gods of their nations. But when Israel was allowed to resettle Palestine, the nations took notice. The God who hides His ways until they are revealed, often does that which is contrary to the politics of the nations.

45:18,19 God created the world with order. He is not a God of chaos and confusion. When He speaks of things concerning the future, we can be assured that those things will come to pass. What He says can be clearly understood. His prophecies can be clearly understood when they are fulfilled.

45:20-25 In this text Isaiah seems to go beyond the national restoration of Israel to Palestine. The national restoration is metaphorical of the restoration from the bondage of sin that would come through the revelation of the Son of God. The revelation of God through the Messiah would bring the opportunity that every knee bow (See comments Ph 2:5-11). The symbolic picture here is that many of all nations would come into a covenant relationship with God. They would be the spiritual Israel. Because all who come into the spiritual Israel will be justified from sin, they will give glory to God.

Chapter 46
OVERTHROW OF BABYLON

46:1,2 ***Bel ... Nebo:*** These were two gods of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Bel was the equal to the Canaanite god Baal, which means "lord." Nebo means "revealer" or "speaker." The temple of Bel was in Babylon and the temple of Nebo was in Borsippa. The great idols of these gods were carried in ox carts (carriages). They were so large that they were a burden to the animals who pulled the carts. The Babylonian King Merodachbaladan sought to carry away some of the idols of Babylon when Sennacherib threatened Babylon. However, he was overtaken, and the idols were taken by Sennacherib. ***They stoop:*** The Holy Spirit is very descriptive in this text in reference to His sarcasm concerning the idolatry of Isaiah's era. Idolatry was what brought Israel down, and thus the Spirit seeks to explain how foolish Israel and the nations were by trusting in the idol gods they made with their hands. The tottering gods of man only illustrated how men had stumbled

into apostasy. ***Themselves have gone into captivity:*** The idol gods could not prevent themselves from going into captivity, much less save their worshipers from bondage.

46:3,4 ***All the remnant of the house of Israel:*** This is a significant statement in reference to the promises that were made to the fathers. When speaking of the restoration of Israel, reference was not only to the restoration of the southern kingdom, but also to all twelve tribes. In order that the promises be fulfilled, a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel had to be in Palestine when the Messiah came. There is no such thing as the lost ten tribes of Israel. ***Upheld by Me from birth:*** Israel was born out of Egyptian captivity and carried by God throughout her history (See Nm 11:12). Even when the nation became old, God was still with her through her apostasy and restoration.

46:5-7 Idol gods were dead. The idols were only the imagination of those who had given up a knowledge of the true God of heaven. When men forsake the word of God, they will create a god after their own image, which god will behave according to their desires. This happened in Israel and it happens among all men throughout the centuries. Simply because one claims to believe in God does not mean that he believes in the God who is identified in the Bible. One can understand the true God of heaven only through the Bible.

46:8-13 ***Declaring the end from the beginning:*** Once one makes a so-called prophecy of the future, and that prophecy does not come to pass, then that person was or is a false prophet. Only the omniscient God knows the future. Anyone who would be so presumptuous as to foretell the future has acted arrogantly in order to gather people to his group of misguided adherents. Prophecy is so foreign to the ability of man that anyone who would claim to prophesy concerning future events has identified himself as a false prophet. ***Ravenous bird:*** Reference could possibly be to Sennacherib, since God called him from the east in order to bring down judgment on Israel. ***Stouthearted:*** The Hebrew text refers to one who trusts in his own strength, or those who are self-sufficient.

Chapter 47

47:1-7 See 14:4-21. This is a song wherein God taunts the arrogant Babylonians for their ruthless treatment of His people. What the Babylonians did not consider was that God used them to discipline His people. Their bondage of Israel was not of their own invention and power. Since they did not give credit to God for using them to correct His people, they will be stripped naked and taken into bondage themselves. They were as a queen in all her glory. But they would become humiliated by God when they become the victim of their own ill-treatment of God's people. From sitting on a throne, Babylon would sit in the dust.

47:8-15 As was common among pagan nations, the kings deified their kingdoms by deifying themselves (See Zp 2:15). In her human wisdom she arrogantly exalted herself above all nations. Because the Babylonians rejected any knowledge of the true God of heaven, they invented for themselves sources of their own wisdom. They acquired false wisdom for themselves through their prognosticators and mediums. They developed a religion of mysticism that was subject to their reading of the stars and planets. They had thus wearied themselves with the futility of their search for knowledge from the physical world in order to discern matters of the spirit world. God challenged them to consult their normal mediums for wisdom in order that they gain understanding of the national calamity that was coming upon them. But the source of their supposed knowledge—their astrologers, star gazers and prognosticators—would be consumed.

Chapter 48
REBUKE OF THE UNFAITHFUL

48:1-11 In this chapter God brought to remembrance what He had accomplished through Israel. ***Rebel from the womb:*** From the time God brought Israel out of Egyptian captivity, they were a stiffnecked people. They took pride in the fact that they were the people of the true God. But they soon forgot this as they started claiming for themselves the victories they had over others. They took pride in their preservation as a nation, and thus gave credit to their idols that they had made after the nations around them. So God resorted to prophecy in order to manifest the foolishness of their idols. His prophecy was so specific that they, through their idols, would have predicted the opposite of what would happen in their history. Therefore, lest they give credit to their idols, God worked in their history contrary to what men would have expected. For ***My own sake:*** God worked through Israel for His own glory. The existence of the nation, therefore, was not because they were a righteous people. God knew that centuries later we would be reading the history of the nation of Israel and come to the conclusion that there is a God, and that this God works out the destiny of His eternal plan of redemption regardless of wicked men (See comments Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11).

48:12-16 The eternal and unchangeable God created all things, and thus has not changed in His plan of redemption through Israel. ***Who ... declared these things:*** Through their idols—the representation of their own intellect—they could never have foretold what God would do with them. But through His servants, the prophets, God revealed His plan and brought it about throughout Israel's history. ***I have called him:*** Israel must understand that it was God who called the Babylonians to come upon His people. They must understand the reason why they were called. If they understand that the captivities happened because of their apostasy from God to idols, then there was hope for repentance. If they did not believe the prophets in order to understand this, then they were doomed.

48:17-19 If they had been obedient, they would have had peace throughout their history. They would have been helped by His commandments. God gives man freedom to make choices. When we make wrong choices, we must pay the price that our sin brings upon us.

48:20-22 Their deliverance from Egyptian captivity seems here to be prophetic of a time when they would go forth from Babylonian captivity. When they went forth from Egypt, God provided sustenance in the desert. He would do the same after their repentance, and deliverance from Babylonian captivity. But He reminds them that there is no peace for the wicked, and thus they must come forth as a repentant people.

The Prince Of Peace
(49:1 – 57:21)

Outline: (1) Restoration of Israel and light for Gentiles (49:1 – 50:3), (2) The obedient Servant (50:4-11), (3) Words of comfort (51:1 – 52:12), (3) The Suffering Servant (52:13 – 53:12), (4) Jerusalem is glorified (54:1-17), (5) Grace for the obedient (55:1-13), (6) Hope for the Gentiles (56:1-8), (7) Condemnation of wicked leadership (56:9 – 57:21)

Chapter 49
RESTORATION OF ISRAEL & LIGHT FOR GENTILES

49:1-4 In these verses the Suffering Servant is introduced where He speaks of Himself. He calls to the whole world concerning His mission. He is the One sent out from God, called from conception with a destiny. He is God's source of glory. He goes forth to do the will of God. Though His mission seems to bear no fruit, God will make sure of His reward. God kept his Servant close in His quiver. He was kept close until it was His time for ministry.

49:5,6 The Servant's mission was to be a restorer of Jacob and a redeemer of Israel. His mission was beyond the Jews in that He was to call the Gentiles. God's work through the spiritual Israel was to bring the Gentiles into His fold.

49:7 The physical nation of Israel was certainly the foundation of the metaphor for this reference to the suffering Servant of Jesus. The nation was abhorred by the nations of the world. But upon their victory over captivity, they were honored as a people. Jesus was despised and rejected, but upon His resurrection He was manifested to be for millions the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15)

49:8-13 A time of forgiveness came through travail. The Mediator of the covenant has come, and thus it is a day of salvation. Israel was restored to her land that was left desolate. Those who were in bondage now enjoyed their freedom in the light of the Savior. The released captives make their way home over highland pastures that are provided by God. They will come from all distant lands to which they were taken into captivity. ***Sinim:*** Even from the far east in the regions of India and China, they will come. No matter how far His people were scattered throughout the world, they will be restored to God in their land. It would be a time for glorious jubilation.

49:14-21 Isaiah reassures Israel that God will not forget His people. He encouraged them by saying that those who destroyed them would be gone. It would be unthinkable that a mother would forget her child. Then certainly, God could never forget His children by leaving them in captivity. Jerusalem's walls are engraved on the palm of His hands. ***Because of the inhabitants:*** Israel will be embarrassed because they complained that God had forgotten them. There will be so many in the land that there will be little room for them. The restored Israelites to the land will be surprised to see the multitude who were born in captivity, but desired to return to the land of their fathers.

49:22,23 The reassurance of the prophecy is that the restored Israel will again populate the land. Those who held them captive will be their nursing fathers and mothers as they allow them to return to the land. The Medo-Persian Empire, through Cyrus, gave the Israelites the supplies they needed in order to return to the land and rebuild the city of Jerusalem (See comments Er & Ne). The fact of their return would be evidence that God was true to His people, and thus the true God among all the nations of the world.

49:24-26 The return of His people to the promised land proved that God is king over all nations of the world. He is stronger than those who lead others into captivity. He sets nations against one another in order to bring forth His people, which thing He did by setting the Medo-Persian Empire against the Babylonian Empire.

50:1-3 ***Divorcement ... sell:*** There were some who would assume that God had estranged Himself from Israel for some unknown reason, or that He had given her to a creditor for some unknown debt. In the context here, He wants Israel to know that her separation from Him was caused by sin. She as totally responsible for the separation. She could place no blame on Him.

Chapter 50
THE OBEDIENT SERVANT

50:4-6 God knows how to speak in a way that is helpful to those who sin. He knows how to listen to those who are repentant and seek to be obedient. If one comes to God obediently, He will listen to their prayers. But those who live in rebellion will find no answer from Him in reference to their sinful state of behavior. God works in the lives of those who seek to obey Him. ***I gave My back:*** The prophetic substance of this context looks forward to Jesus who was the manifestation of God's listening to those who sought Him. The manifestation of the Son of God was God's answer to the prayers of the obedient who sought deliverance.

50:7-9 The text turns to the Servant of God who suffers at the hand of those who would persecute Him. Because of His faith, His adversaries seek His humiliation. But because He is assured that the Father is working with and through Him, He will fulfill His destiny. ***Like a flint:*** Nothing will stop Him from accomplishing the purpose for which He came into the world. Because God is working through Him, He has no reason to be ashamed of what He is doing. When one realizes that he is doing the will of God, he has no reason to be ashamed (Rm 1:16).

50:10,11 Those who fear the Lord are those who are obedient to His will. Though this person is walking in the darkness of this world, he looks toward the light. He must thus have faith in the faithfulness of God to be with him. But those who stir up strife and persecution for God's people have stirred up the punishment of hell for themselves (See Mt 25:41,46; 2 Th 1:6-9; 1 Pt 4:19).

Chapter 51
WORDS OF COMFORT

51:1-3 The plea is to look to the father of our faith, Abraham. He was the physical origin of Israel. He is the spiritual origin of all those who trust in God for direction. Those who live by faith are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. National Israel was born from the womb of Sarah. But the

church was born from the faith of Abraham. ***The Lord will comfort Zion:*** God will restore national Israel to her land that was laid waste. He will bring the repentant remnant once again into their homeland. Their faith was the foundation upon which God restored them first to Himself, and then to their homeland.

51:4-6 ***Hearken:*** This is the key word of the chapter. In order for God to perform His promises to the fathers, Israel must listen to the will of God. Sin led them into their predicament of being separated from God. Repentance will bring them back into His blessings. They will again be His people and His nation. He will restore His salvation to them. ***A light of the people:*** God's law will go forth as the light for all the nations of the world. The world will be enlightened by the word of God. The light would be a new law that would be applicable to all the world (See comments Jr 31:31-33; Mt 28:19,20). ***Salvation will be forever:*** Though all that man sees in this world will vanish away, God's word will abide forever. The word "forever" emphasizes the sustainability or certainty of the salvation in contrast to that which will pass away. Because it is sure and steadfast, the salvation will continue without end. Emphasis is on the steadfast existence of the salvation.

51:7,8 God's people do not need to be afraid of those who would persecute them simply because they will be preserved by the word of God long after those who persecute them will have passed away.

51:9-11 ***Dragon:*** The crocodile of the Nile River. ***Ransomed ... redeemed:*** The deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea is the literal and historical definition for these two metaphors in reference to the salvation of the saints. God's people were ransomed from captivity. Many Egyptians died in the Sea when they were redeemed. They were redeemed from a captivity from which they could not deliver themselves. The works of ransom and redemption, therefore, were the works of God, not something the people earned through their works.

51:12-16 Since God is the one who delivers, then there is no reason why one should fear man. The more we understand the greatness of God, the less we will fear those who seek to oppress us. Israel did not need to fear, therefore, because God had come to them with the proclamation that they were still His covenanted people.

51:17-20 God's people must be confident because God is their help. Israel had become a nation that was senselessly drunk on the idolatry of the nations. They subsequently wandered away from God. Their kings and leaders could not help them. They had brought themselves into a social stupor where no one could help. And then when they found themselves without mercy in captivity, God came for them.

51:21-23 Israel's deliverance meant that the fury that God released on her because of her sin, would be released on those who brought her into captivity. ***The cup:*** This was the cup of God's wrath. It was first poured out on Israel. Now it was going to be poured out on those who persecuted His people.

Chapter 52

52:1,2 This is a call to Jerusalem to dress up for glory. The unbelievers will never again strip Israel naked and humiliate her before the nations. This was a call to stand and be who she was destined to be. The captive people would be seated for honor.

52:3-6 The Israelites had sold themselves into bondage by disobedience. Through God's grace, however, they would be brought forth out of bondage. Their deliverance was free, for God could have left them in the captivity of the Assyrians and Babylonians. It was only by His grace that they were freed. God paid nothing to any nation in order to set His people free.

52:7-10 The good news of their deliverance not only went throughout Israel, but throughout all the nations (See comments Rm 10:14,15). The nations wondered at the survival of this nation. They assumed that Israel would have assimilated with the nations, and subsequently lost her identity. ***Your God reigns:*** Israel's return to her homeland was evidence to the nations that God was working in His people. What all the nations thought was impossible—that Israel would again become a nation—God was able to do.

52:11,12 The Israelites would go out of captivity, not as they went out in haste from Egypt. They would go forth from captivity in peace in order to establish again the nationhood of the people. ***Go out:*** The call was for them to come out of captivity. Though all Jews did not return to their homeland of Palestine, there were thousands who did in order to reestablish the identity of Israel (See comments Er & Ne). Those who did not return remained among the nations in order to influence them to turn to the one true God. God needed only a remnant in Palestine in order to reestablish the identity of Israel for the coming of the Messiah. For world evangelism purposes in the future, He needed the rest to remain scattered among the nations. The scattered Jews would be the evangelism medium through whom the gospel would go into all the world (See comments Is 2:1-4; At 2).

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

52:13-15 Isaiah looked beyond the return of the captives to a time when the Son of Man, the Messiah, would come. Beginning with verse 13, and extending through the end of chapter 53, we are given in prophecy one of the most graphic word pictures of the Christ who would come to redeem God's people from the captivity of sin. He is pictured as the victorious priest who gives Himself as a ransom for the people of God. These verses introduce God's Servant. He commands all to behold Him. As the nations were astonished with the exaltation of Israel, so they will be astonished at the exaltation of the Servant Jesus. As the nations marveled at the suffering and deliverance of Israel, so they would marvel at the suffering and deliverance of the Savior. He would suffer, not because of His own sin, but because of the sins of others (See comments Ph 2:5-11). ***Sprinkle many nations:*** As the sprinkling of blood in reference to atonement, and water as a sign of purification (Lv 14:7), so here the Servant would sprinkle nations in reference to expiation and sanctification. ***Kings:*** The awesome social impact the wounded Servant will have on the history of mankind will astonish even those who are in high offices.

Chapter 53

53:1-3 ***Who has believed our report:*** What is stated in this chapter is so astounding that few would believe that it was written over six hundred years before its fulfillment. No prophecy as this could have been fulfilled by accident. ***Arm of the Lord:*** God strongly intervened in history in order to bring about the fulfillment of this prophecy. ***He grew up:*** This prophecy is so certain of fulfillment, that the verb tenses are in the past tense. It is worded as if it had already come to pass. ***Before Him:*** Before the Father. ***Tender plant:*** Jesus was a suckling plant from the root of Jesse (11:1). ***Dry ground:*** He originated out of Galilee, one of the most unlikely places from which a great leader would be born (Compare Jn 1:46). ***No form or comeliness:*** Jesus' physical appearance did not command attention. He was not attractive to look upon. ***Despised and rejected:*** As a revolutionary personality with His teaching and conduct, those in religious high places envied Him. His teaching was contrary to the Judaism that was taught during His lifetime. The envy of the religious leaders drove them to crucify Him. ***Man of sorrows:*** He was a man with our physical sicknesses, for He was incarnate in the likeness of man (Ph 2:5-8; Hb 4:15). ***We hid:*** Those who were with Him during His ministry would not stand with Him during His trials and crucifixion. He thus had to stand alone for us. ***Did not esteem:*** Many of those to whom He came did not accept Him as the Messiah and Son of God (Jn 1:10,11). Nevertheless, God accomplished His work through Him.

53:4-6 ***Borne our griefs:*** His salvational work for man was specific, and definitely carried out. Though many rejected Him, it was their grief and pains that He bore. ***Carried:*** He took up the burdens of our grief and carried them away. ***Smitten by God:*** Those who rejected Jesus, accused Him of being from Baalzebal, and thus stricken by God for assuming to be the Son of God (See Mk 14:61-64; Lk 22:37). ***Wounded ... bruised:*** This was His destiny. He did fall into the hands of wicked men, and subsequently was crucified for the sins of men. His death was not an accident, unplanned by God. It was for this very purpose that Jesus came into the world. He was crucified before the world was created (See comments Rv 13:8). He was bruised through crucifixion, but in being bruised, He crushed the head of Satan (See comments Gn 3:15). ***We like sheep:*** The world had wandered off into sin. The cross, therefore, was by grace, for there was no one who was righteous, and thus deserving of the forgiveness of God (Rm 3:9,10,23). ***To his own way:*** As with the spirit of idolatry, so is man in everything. He seeks to do only that which is right in his own eyes. He thus turns to satisfying the lust of the eyes and flesh, while following after the pride of life. ***Laid on Him:*** He suffered on behalf of the wicked (See Mk 10:45). Since sin is against God, then God had to be incarnate in order to be the sacrificial lamb to bear the sins of men. Jesus came specifically into the world to be the sacrificial Lamb of God.

53:7-9 Jesus was harshly treated and humiliated for our sake. He humbled Himself to be mistreated by those whom He had created (See Cl 1:16; compare Ph 2:5-8). ***He did not open His mouth:*** Jesus took Himself to the cross. He had the power to lay down His own life for our sins (Jn 10:17,18). He had the power to take it up again. When it was time for His death, He did not open His mouth in order to defend His innocence. He allowed Satan to work in men in order to take Himself to the cross. ***Lamb to the slaughter:*** He was the sacrificial lamb of God (Jn 1:36; Rv 5:12). ***By oppression and judgment:*** Jesus suffered from the tyranny of evil men, and thus He suffered the violence of men and unjust judgment. ***Who will declare:*** The people were indifferent during the crucifixion. They allowed jealous religious leaders to crucify Him. ***Grave with the wicked:*** Dishonor and humiliation followed Jesus from the cross even to the grave. ***No violence:*** He had done nothing by which He deserved the treatment He received.

53:10-12 ***Pleased the Lord:*** God willed the cross for the sake of those who would believe. The Father allowed His Son to go through the humiliation of the suffering for the sake of those who would be drawn to the cross. ***His seed:*** Christians are the seed of the Servant. We are the seed because we have believed and obeyed the gospel of His death and resurrection (See comments Rm 6:3-6). Jesus is now reigning at the right hand of God, and continues to prosper as people are obedient to the gospel. He now sees the results of His work, and rejoices over our obedience. Though Jesus had to travail in His labor to bring us forth as the people of God, He is satisfied with His work. His death was successful and sufficient for the salvation of men. ***I will divide Him a portion:*** Jesus was worthy to receive the blessing of the church because He gave Himself for all those who have obeyed His death, burial and resurrection (See comments Rm 6:3-6). Jesus was worthy to receive glory, honor and power because He was crucified for transgressors (See comments Rv 4:11).

Chapter 54

JERUSALEM IS GLORIFIED

54:1-3 The historical foundation of the metaphor that refers to the bride and new Jerusalem find their meaning in this context. The new Jerusalem is composed of those who are called out of the world by the gospel. The church is thus the assembly of those who have been wooed by the gospel. The bride, the church, is wooed and will be married to the Groom when He comes again. There is a restoration of the people of God to the point that they are new in His presence. All this is the result of the work of the Suffering Servant who accomplished His work that is pictured in chapter 53. ***Sing, O barren one:*** The exodus of the exiles from captivity portrays the new exodus that would come as a result of the calling by the sacrificial Servant of God. The restored people of God would compose an exodus from the captivity of sin. ***Enlarge the place of your tent:*** The exiles of the new exodus would far exceed those who returned from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. The new exodus would be composed of those from all the world, both Jews and Gentiles. As a nomadic family must enlarge their tent in order to accommodate the growth of the family, so the spiritual tent of God must be enlarged in order to bring in all people of all nations (See comments Mt 28:19,20).

54:4-8 ***Not be ashamed:*** Israel will not have to be ashamed

of her youth in the bondage of Egypt. Neither will she be disgraced by her captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians. God gave birth to Israel, and thus He was her father who would bring her out of the widowhood of captivity. Though for a short time God hid His face from her while she was in captivity, that time would pass and she would remember it no longer. ***God of the whole earth:*** Israel must never forget that God is not the God of Israel alone. In fact, the existence of Israel was based on the fact that God was seeking to send the Savior of the world into the world. Israel existed solely for the purpose of fulfilling the promise of the Blessing that would come from the seedline of Abraham, which Blessing would accomplish the work that was described in chapter 53. ***Wife of youth:*** Israel was God's "wife of youth" until the bride, the church, was brought forth. ***A brief moment:*** For a short time God abandoned Israel in captivity, but she was brought forth a penitent bride who remained loyal to her Maker.

54:9,10 ***Waters of Noah:*** These words clearly state that the flood of Noah's day was not a local washout, but a global calamity that changed the face of the entire earth. God promised Noah and all life that He would never again destroy the world through such a flood of waters. He promised the redeemed Israel that He would never again allow her to be taken into captivity (See Gn 9:12-17).

54:11-17 God now turns to the calamity that befell the city of Jerusalem. The new spiritual Jerusalem would never suffer as the physical Jerusalem when it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. ***I will lay your stones:*** The metaphors that picture the new Jerusalem give hope and comfort for the future of national Israel that was at the time of Isaiah undergoing threats from the Assyrians, and then the Babylonians. When Isaiah wrote these words the temple was still standing. He speaks of a reconstruction, but the reconstruction is not of the temple in Jerusalem. In the picture here of the new Jerusalem, the temple is not mentioned. The temple of David was never in the original plan of God for Israel. It was David's desire which God accommodated. God always wanted His people to feel a direct connection with Him as they worked the land throughout Palestine. The temple centralized His presence, and thus always left some in Israel feeling too far from the symbol of the presence of God. In the new Jerusalem, the church, God would always be present wherever the church existed. His presence would not be identified by a physical structure (See comments Jn 4:19-24). His presence would be identified by those with whom He dwelt (Lk 17:20,21). ***Taught by the Lord:*** See Jn 6:45. ***If anyone fiercely assails you:*** Though the church would be persecuted, the persecution would not originate from God. God formerly used the nations to discipline His people, but He would not do such with the church. ***No weapon ... will prosper:*** No evil nation or force would ever destroy the church. After the establishment of the new Jerusalem, the church, it would never go out of existence. The beauty of the picture is in the fact that the restored people of God would carry on throughout eternity. Therefore, we must see in the restoration of Israel from captivity more than a simple restoration of Jews to the land of Palestine. The remnant that returned was the seed from which the church would begin five centuries later. Then the church, after centuries on earth, would transition into a heavenly dwelling that is yet to come. All this Isaiah pictures before the physical city of Jerusalem had fallen to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. It was an incredible prophecy at the time, and something that was certainly not understood by the first recipients. Isaiah himself surely did not understand what he was saying and writing (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12).

Chapter 55
GRACE FOR THE OBEDIENT

55:1-5 Attention is drawn to the blessings that have resulted from the word of the Servant of chapters 53 & 54. The call is to the many of the seed of Israel who blossomed from her restoration and the building of the new Jerusalem. ***Without price:*** God's grace is free. If they heeded the invitation to come, they would receive more than that for which they could pay through good works. They could not merit what the Lord had to offer. The invitation to freely eat and drink of that which the Lord offers is to all men (Jn 3:16). ***Everlasting covenant:*** See comments Jr 31:31-34. ***Sure mercies of David:*** Reference is to the grace of God that would be extended through the Messiah (See 2 Sm 7:4-17; Ps 89:34,35). David was one who gave himself to the people in order to lead the people according to the will of God. David was a prophet and king, and thus exemplified in his life a prophetic picture of the One who would come to lead the people. ***Nations ... will run to you:*** The Gentiles would come to the Messiah who would come out of Israel.

55:6,7 God is always present to accept the repentance of those who seek to turn from their wayward paths. There is urgency in repentance, not that God will leave us, but that we may lose our opportunity to repent. Death may steal away our opportunity, or we may become so hardened of heart that we feel no pricking of the conscience in reference to our sin (See comments 2 Pt 2:20-22).

55:8-13 ***My thoughts are not your thoughts:*** Contrary to the spirit of idolatry that plagued Israel, God does not behave as they conceived their idolatrous gods to behave. He was not created after the imagination of the minds of man, because He created man. ***Higher:*** God is beyond the comprehension of man, and thus He is not the invention of man. Only those who are frustrated in their efforts to understand God fully, or want God to behave as they so choose, seek to create false gods whom they can understand. But when we imagine a god that we can fully understand, then we can be assured that we have imagined the wrong god. ***So will My word:*** God's word will produce fruit as sure as rain from the heavens. It is the word of God that changes the hearts of man (Hb 4:12). When one responds to the word of God, it produces those who are of God. If the pure word of God is spoken, then it will transform the lives of those who have a sincere heart. It will change the hearts of the proud into hearts of thanksgiving (See comments 2 Co 4:15).

Chapter 56
HOPE FOR THE GENTILES

56:1-8 The promise in this context focuses on those against

whom the nationalistic Jews were prejudiced, the Gentiles. God's grace was to all men. ***Keeps the Sabbath:*** The Sabbath was given as a sign of the covenant that God had established with national Israel. The symbolism in this context, therefore, is in reference to those who come to the people of God and keep the sign of the covenant. Reference here is to the eunuchs and the Gentiles. When national Israel was still in existence, one had to keep the Sabbath in order to indicate that he submitted to the law of the covenant. If he wanted to make his home with the Israelites, the eunuch and foreigner had to honor the Sabbath. When one became a proselyte, he was not to be discriminated against, or made to feel that he had no part with Israel. If he kept the Sabbath and obeyed the law of the covenant, then he was to be accepted into the nation of Israel. Though the eunuch had been castrated, and thus could not produce a physical heritage, he must be reassured that he would have a spiritual heritage with the family of God. Though the foreigner had no land possession with Israel, he must be reassured that he would have a part with Israel. ***Everyone who keeps the Sabbath:*** The interpreter must not make the mistake of failing to transition from the literal to the spiritual in this context. National Israel is metaphorically used to refer to the church. The church, therefore, is not national Israel. Circumcision and the Sabbath were signs by which national Israel was to be identified and separated from the nations of the world. But these are not literal signs that now identify the spiritual Israel of God. It is circumcision of the heart that identifies the people of God today (Cl 2:11-14). In Jesus, identity of discipleship has moved from the physical to the spiritual. It is not keeping of the literal Sabbath that identifies the disciples of Jesus. It is the keeping of every day of the week as a total commitment of the transformed life (Rm 12:1,2). Discipleship has changed from focus on one day, to every day. ***Gathers the outcasts:*** The prejudicial Jews must remember that they were at one time outcasts among the nations. When God gathered them from among the nations, their attitudes had to be changed in reference to those they formerly considered outcasts, that is, the eunuchs and Gentiles. ***House of prayer:*** What was considered a privilege by the Israelites would be the right of all men (See Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17; Jn 10:16; Ep 2:17; 1 Th 5:17). Every disciple of Jesus has direct access to God through prayer. God's people today no longer look to a physical temple in order to pray, but pray directly to God wherever they are.

CONDEMNATION OF WICKED LEADERSHIP

56:9-12 By reviewing the ravaging of Judah's territory by the nations, God summons the people to heed what He has to say about Judah's judgment to come. This is a picture of a degraded and immoral society that was ripe for purging. The nation had wearied itself with idolatry. The leaders had burdened the people with their lack of understanding. ***Come to eat all you beasts:*** God summoned the Assyrians to come and feast on Israel. ***Watchmen are blind:*** Judah's leaders were aloof to the impending judgment of God. ***Ignorant:*** Their false prophets spoke of peace, when the beast of Assyria was about to devour them. ***Mute dogs:*** Instead of sounding forth an alarm, the watchmen spoke nothing, for they believed that Jerusalem would never fall. ***Greedy ... look to their own way:*** The full-time prophets were more concerned for their own well-being than the safety of the nation. They sought to secure their support more than minister to the people. They were blind guides for the people. They were lazy. They were cowards. And they were consumed in their own self-indolence and greed.

Chapter 57

57:1,2 This is a picture of a nation that has given itself over to moral degradation. No one cares for the righteous. When he dies, no one takes notice. This is the social condition of Israel before God sent the Assyrians against the northern kingdom, and later the Babylonians against the southern kingdom. When a society loses its moral direction, it turns on itself. It is worthless for protecting the righteous and for producing souls for heaven.

57:3-10 ***Sorceress ... adulterer ... harlot:*** The children of wicked parents continue the legacy of their parents. In this case, they continued the debauchery of an idolatrously degenerate parentage. Isaiah's generation was made up of those of idolatrous fathers and mothers who passed on to their children a heritage of idolatry and moral degradation. They were thus children of lawbreakers and liars. The society morally degraded to the point of sacrificing the children to false gods they imagined in their minds. It was a society that was ready to be given over to destruction. ***Behind the door:*** Their sexual passions were unleashed behind closed doors where they practiced orgies and fornication. They believed in an assortment of gods who would condone their wicked behavior. They thus sacrificed to gods they believed were in the valleys, on mountains, in their houses, and wherever they would satisfy their lusts with immoral behavior. ***Looked on their manhood:*** They venerated the genital organs, a common practice among pagan religions. Their craving for pornography gave witness to the fact that sex became the focus of society and the relationships between men and women. The exaltation of Asherah worship and the debauchery of Molech worship corrupted their thinking and moral behavior. They became a society of no moral return, producing children of like mind. God thus consigned them to destruction as He did Sodom and Gomorrah. However, He would sift out a remnant for the preservation of Israel. ***"There is no hope":*** They did not have the moral sense of realizing that they were on a road to no moral return. Their life-style of debauchery would be the end of them.

57:11-13 They feared man more than God, and thus followed after social pressures to live according to the degraded morals of the day. God had been patient with Israel throughout her history. But now it was time for judgment. When the calamity of judgment came, God told them that their idols would not answer when they cried out for help. When the prophets of their idolatrous worship proclaimed peace, God would bring calamity in order to teach them that their idols were useless. ***Your righteousness:*** God sarcastically refers to their self-righteousness. They claimed to be righteous, but

their righteousness was according to the religion that they had created after their own desires. Their works that they believed were right, were actually contrary to the will of God. They had indeed created a religion after their own desires, and gods, who in their minds, condoned their wicked behavior. ***Carry them all away:*** The destiny of idol gods and their worshipers is destruction, for when the worshipers are taken away, so are the gods that they created in their minds.

57:14-21 ***Build up:*** The way was prepared for restoration by removing the wickedness of the people that was defined in the preceding verses (See 40:3; 62:10). ***I dwell:*** Though God is exalted above the heavens, at the same time the omnipresent God dwells in the hearts of the humble and contrite. ***Iniquity of his unjust gain:*** While dwelling in the hearts of the contrite, God judges those who live in sinful rebellion. God judged His people for their rebellion, and then hid Himself from them while they were in captivity. Once they repented, He revealed Himself in order to heal them of their sinful ways. He created them anew through captivity and restored them to the promised land. ***Peace:*** Though the wicked will have no peace in this life, the repentant enjoy the peace of God that passes all understanding (Ph 4:7).

Peace From God
(58:1 – 66:24)

Outline: (1) Contrast between truth and false worship (58:1-14), (2) Confession and salvation (59:1-21), (3) Peace and prosperity for the redeemed (60:1-22), (4) The mission of the Messiah (61:1-11), (5) Restoration of Zion (62:1 – 63:6), (6) Prayer for pardon and preservation (63:7 – 64:12), (7) Blessing of the future Israel (65:1-25), (8) Sincere worship (66:1-24)

Chapter 58
CONSTRAST BETWEEN TRUTH & FALSE WORSHIP

58:1-5 ***Cry aloud:*** Isaiah must not be timid about announcing the message of this context. He must be bold and lift up his voice like a trumpet. ***Show ... their transgression:*** It is the duty of the preacher of God to reveal the sin of the people by comparing their behavior with the word of God. In this context there are those who present their religious behavior before the Lord, but wonder why He does not answer, or respond to their religiosity. They fast, and there is no response from God. They offer their sacrifices, but there is no one there to accept them. They were performing the right religious rituals, but they were insincere. Their insincerity was manifested through their unrighteous behavior. One must never assume that the religious rituals one may practice are a manifestation of a humble heart. Neither must one assume that he is declared righteous by the insincere performance of religious rituals. ***They take delight in approaching unto God:*** The deception was that they had created religious behavior after their own desires. They deceived themselves into believing that if they performed religious ordinances, God would respond to their needs. Their apostasy was not that they became irreligious, or gave up faith, but that their religious behavior became insincere.

58:6-12 One can legally perform the rituals of the law, and still live contrary to its principles. These people presented a false humility. They were more concerned about a successful business, than the evil of exploiting their employees. It was inconsistent to legally fast, and at the same time be hard on their laborers, refusing to feed the poor, and even refusing to care for one's own family. Their motive for fasting, therefore, was to obligate God to respond on their behalf. But they were wrong, for the spirit of true fasting involves sincere humility and a life-style of mercy. Their purpose for keeping the Sabbath had to be restored. They must restore the Sabbath as an opportunity to focus on the Lord, not simply as a time to rest from their labors. ***Then your light will break out:*** If they would correct their behavior in their relationships with their fellow man, then their pleas to the Lord would bring a response. ***The Lord will answer:*** Answered prayer, therefore, is dependent on one's righteous behavior, not one's performance of religious rites. If they would respond to God's will, God would respond with His presence. His presence would be manifested through His blessing of them. When others would witness the blessing of God upon them, the generations that would follow would give them praise. ***Your sons:*** Though they must go into captivity and the destruction of the nation, the generation that would follow them would be restored because of the repentance of the fathers. If they passed on a spiritual legacy of repentance to their children, then there would be good times for their children. When the fathers repent, the children see in them their commitment to the Lord. There is nothing greater to give as an inheritance to our children than a spiritual legacy.

58:13,14 ***Not doing your own ways:*** They had made the Sabbath a time to speak of business deals or seeking pleasures of this world. Instead of focusing on the Lord on the Sabbath rest, they took the opportunity to carry on with business arrangements. But if they would turn from such worldly mindedness on a day that was to be devoted to spiritual thinking, God would turn to them with blessings.

Chapter 59
CONFESSION AND SALVATION

59:1-8 Isaiah described here the social degradation of the society that led to their captivity. ***Shortened:*** God does not leave us. We leave Him. He does not stop listening. We stop speaking to Him in prayer. ***Separated between you and your God:*** When in sin, we cease our communication with and dependence on God. We thus separate ourselves from Him. When in sin, God feels distant from us because we have distanced ourselves from Him. ***Hidden His face:*** The face of God is toward us to help. But when we turn our back on Him, we walk in the darkness of our own shadow of sin. God cannot look upon sin, for sin is against who God is. As long as one continues to live in sin, God cannot look upon him. ***Hands ... fingers ... lips ... tongue:*** They used their entire being as instruments for sin. ***Justice:*** The judicial system was corrupted. ***Trust in vanity:*** They trusted in the chaos of society, and thus no justice could come to the righteous. ***Conceive mischief:*** See Gn 6:5. ***Viper's eggs:*** What they produced was spiritually dead. ***Spider's web:*** They did their works in

order to entrap others. They were a society that was morally imploding and in a state of self-destruction. They were a society that hurried to do evil (Mk 7:14-23). ***Innocent blood:*** See comments Hb 11:32-38. It is possible that Isaiah himself suffered death at the hands of Manasseh who succeeded Hezekiah. The society had digressed to the point that innocent people were being killed because of the crime of others.

59:9-14 The oppressed during the reign of Manasseh could find no justice in society. There was no hope since society had morally spiralled down to the point of no moral return. The righteous had no hope that their injustices would be righted. They looked for a gleam of light, but there was no hope in sight. Society was so perverse that the righteous groped for direction, and could find none. People morally stumbled along because there was no correct moral standard by which they could direct their lives. It was a nation that had forgotten God's laws because they had turned their backs on God (Hs 4:6). ***Roar like bears:*** Their complaints to God did not bring them relief from social injustice because they would not enact God's law in their lives. They scoffed at the law and prophets of the law as Isaiah. ***Sins testify against us:*** Their behavior was the evidence that they had forsaken God (Ez 8:6-15; Dn 9:5-15). The deplorable picture that Isaiah paints probably took place during the last years of his life and during the early reign of Manasseh. His speaking out in this way possibly led to his death. The degradation of society at the time was beyond repair within itself. It was a society that could be repaired only through captivity. ***Truth has fallen:*** When a society gives up truth and equity, it is destined to self-destruction. We must keep in mind that the written law of God, the Torah, was probably lost to the people. We could assume this because a copy of the law was found during repairs to the temple during the reign of Josiah (2 Kg 22). It seems that even the religious leadership of Israel did not have a copy of the law until a copy was discovered in the repairs of the temple.

59:15-19 ***Departs from evil:*** Those who did not practice evil policies would be overtaken by the abundance of evil that prevailed throughout society. ***The Lord saw it:*** When God takes notice of evil, He takes action. ***No intercessor:*** When God saw the moral decay of their wicked society, He was shocked that no one stood up for the righteous against the oppression of the day. He could find no one who was concerned by the state of moral degradation and injustice into which they had fallen. It was at this time in their history that God had to take direct action. Therefore, He intervened on behalf of the righteous remnant in order to save them from total destruction. God sought to save a remnant of Israel, and in order to do so, He had to intervene on their behalf. ***He put on righteousness:*** Isaiah pictures a deliverance beyond the physical remnant of Israel. He looks into the future when the Savior would come into the world for the spiritual salvation of God's people (See Ep 6:14-17; 1 Th 5:8). ***Breastplate:*** Righteousness protects the heart. ***Helmet:*** When one thinks right, he does right. ***Garment:*** The One who would come would clothe himself in the word of God. ***Cloak:*** The zeal to accomplish the will of God would characterize the ministry of the Servant who was to come. ***They will fear:*** Unless men fear God, they will not repent. ***When the enemy comes:*** When the enemy attacks the righteous, the Holy Spirit will lift up a banner of defense for the righteous and against the wicked.

59:20,21 ***The Redeemer will come:*** The Savior of the world would come to Jerusalem. Those who turn to the Redeemer in repentance will have the privilege of coming into a new covenant relationship with God (See comments Jr 31:31-33). Isaiah ends with hope. The hope that is given is not in the salvation of physical Jerusalem or Israel, but in the spiritual salvation of the repentant that would carry on throughout eternity.

Chapter 60
PEACE & PROSPERITY FOR THE REDEEMED

60:1-3 ***Light has come:*** Isaiah places himself at the time of the fulfillment of the Light that comes first to Jerusalem, and then into all the world for the salvation of all men (Jn 8:12). The Light first breaks upon the tops of the mountains, but it will go into all the world. The Light will go from Israel and spread to all humanity (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). ***Gentiles:*** The nations will come to the Light that radiates from Israel.

60:4-9 There will be a joyous homecoming for Israel after the captivity. The literal and historical event upon which the metaphor is based is significant. A remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel returned from the bondage of captivity. They came to the radiant Jerusalem. However, the symbolic picture is of the spiritual Zion, the new Jerusalem, the church, to which all tribes of the earth would flow (See comments 2:1-4). It would be a spiritual homecoming for all those who love God. ***They will come:*** We must picture literal Jerusalem lying in desolation from the destruction of the Babylonians. But when the Medo-Persian King Cyrus allowed the captives to return to their homelands, Israelite captives came from all the territories to which they had been scattered by the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. They came with their wealth in order to rebuild the city (See comments Er & Ne). They came from all directions to Jerusalem in order to restore her former glory.

60:10-14 ***Foreigners ... kings:*** Those who destroyed Jerusalem would aid in its reconstruction. Mercy will replace wrath. The gates of the city will continually be opened to receive others, to receive trade, and to receive the homage of every nation. Those who once despised Israel would pay homage to her.

60:15,16 The city that was once rejected by the nations, becomes the focal point of their spiritual interest. She does not become such because of the national existence of Israel through her restoration, but because of the presence and work of the Redeemer.

60:17,18 Wealth would replace poverty (Compare comments Mt 5:1-9). Justice would be restored. Peace would prevail between the citizens of the city, and righteousness would oversee all relationships. Injustice would cease between citizens. The defense of the city would be its salvation, and its strength would be the praise of God. The symbolism of the context takes us beyond the literal city of Jerusalem into the environment of the church that was to come.

60:19-22 God will be the light of the new Jerusalem because those who are her citizens will have submitted to His will (See Rv 21:23). Righteousness will dwell within the city, for all those who are citizens will have submitted to the will of God (Rv 21:27). It will no longer be that one is born physically into the city, as was the case with national Israel. But in the future one is spiritually born into the city (See comments Jr 31:31-34). ***Inherit the land forever:*** In the context, Isaiah has gone beyond the physical homeland of Israel to the spiritual dwelling of the righteous. Since the context is symbolic, this statement must also be understood in the same context. The "land" is metaphorical of the eternal possession that the righteous receive upon their obedience to the gospel. ***Become a thousand:*** The spiritual Israel by faith, the church, would grow far beyond the physical Israel. ***A strong nation:*** The church.

Chapter 61
THE MISSION OF THE MESSIAH

61:1-3 Isaiah breaks into prophecy of the Anointed One who comes to preach the good news of deliverance and judgment (See Mk 1:1,14). He comes with a message of hope for the humble, comfort for the brokenhearted, and freedom for those in bondage. All that would befall Israel in captivity is here used symbolically to refer to the mission of the Messiah and the salvation that He would bring to those who submit to the good news.

61:4-7 ***Rebuild:*** At the time the prophecy was made, the cities of the northern kingdom were in ruins because of the devastation of the Assyrians. Judah was concerned about the destruction of the cities that they had inhabited for centuries. This prophecy of Isaiah was that the cities would be rebuilt. ***Named the priest of the Lord:*** God originally established Israel as a nation of priests, though there was within Israel the Levitical priesthood that ministered to the nation of priests. As a nation of priests, they were to be representatives of God to all the nations that would pass through the land of Palestine. However, they forsook their priesthood responsibilities by adopting the beliefs of pagan gods. In the future, however, their priesthood would be restored. The nations would support them as representatives of God, which purpose they had forsaken (See comments 1 Pt 2:5,9).

61:8-9 ***Hate:*** See Pv 6:16-19. Israel had been humiliated and shamed by the plundering of the Assyrians. Eventually, Judah would suffer the same at the hands of the Babylonians. But because God hates the plundering of one people of another people, He would judge the Assyrians and Babylonians for their deeds. Their judgment would be that they would cease to be kingdoms of this world.

61:10,11 Instead of destruction coming from the nations upon Israel and Judah, righteousness and praise would come. The persecuted would be adorned by the persecutor. God's people would be adorned in their salvation. They would thus become a fruitful people throughout all the world. God's people, the church, would attract those of the world who are seeking the salvation of God. The borders of the church, therefore, would reach into all nations (See comments Mt 28:19,20).

Chapter 62
RESTORATION OF ZION

62:1-5 It is not clear who the speaker is in this text. It could be God speaking through Isaiah. The most probable speaker is the same as chapter 61. The Servant of God, the Messiah, would not rest until He had accomplished His mission. Righteousness is the light that would go forth and salvation would be the burning flame. ***A new name:*** Because the new Jerusalem will be transformed, she would be deserving of a new identity. It is a name that is known only by God (65:15), and thus can be announced only by Him (See Rv 2:17; 3:12). The name will identify the holiness of the repentant new Jerusalem. ***Forsaken ... Desolate:*** In the captivities, Jerusalem was forsaken, and the land left desolate. ***Hephzibah:*** Literally, "My delight in her." ***Beulah:*** Literally, "married." God would delight in the new Jerusalem. The land would be cultivated and productive. ***Your land will be married:*** The farmers were married to the land. This is symbolic of the fact that God will be married to His people. The sons would be married to the land in the sense that they would again nurture and cultivate the land, just as God nurtures His fold that He cultivates for His glory.

62:6-9 ***Watchmen:*** The prophets were the watchmen for God. They perceived the social conditions of the people, and then proclaimed the message of God. The duty of the watchmen was to give warning. In 56:10 the watchmen did not carry out their duties. It was the purpose of God's watchmen to proclaim the promises of God, and then intercede for the people through prayer that God keep His promises to His people. ***The Lord has sworn:*** Based on His greatness and power to fulfill, God is about to commit Himself to a promise that He will fulfill (See comments Hb 6:14-20). His promise here is that Israel would never again succumb to the plundering of foreign nations. They had suffered from the results of their sins, which suffering God had foretold (Dt 28:33,51; see Jg 6:4,11; 2 Ch 28:18; Is 16:9).

62:10-12 Isaiah ends with a prophecy of the coming Messiah. Based on the returning captives from Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, the prophecy reaches into the future to the time when the Messiah would come into Jerusalem. ***Go through the gates:*** The double imperative command may refer to going out from captivity through the gates of bondage. The highway was symbolic of their return to the land. It was to be an easy way back to Jerusalem with a banner that would rally the people together for the exodus. ***Your salvation comes:*** The exiles were saved from bondage. The new spiritual Jerusalem was saved from the bondage of sin by the coming of the Redeemer. ***Holy people:*** The citizens of the new Jerusalem will have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, and thus they would never again be forsaken by God. The redeemed church of the Lord would be composed of people from all nations of the world (Rv 7:9)

Chapter 63

This is a symbolic chapter that pictures Israel's conflict with the Edomites. Emphasis in the picture is on the Conqueror who marches in victory over the enemy of God's people.

63:1-6 ***Edom:*** Edom was the enemy of Israel since the days when Israel came out of Egyptian captivity. As the descendants of Esau, the nation continually set themselves against the Israelites (Hb 12:16). The symbolic picture here is of God's total destruction of all of Israel's enemies, which would include Edom (See 45:19-24). ***Bozrah:*** Edom's capital. ***I will tread them in My anger:*** Since Edom was the perpetual enemy of Israel, then the nation was the ideal symbol to represent God's destruction of all those who would set themselves, or had set themselves, against His people. In God's restoration of Israel, no nation would be allowed to work against what God would do to bring His people back to Palestine. ***Day of vengeance:*** The trampling of Edom was representative of all those nations who had fought against Israel throughout her history. No nation was worthy to set itself against God's people, even though God used pagan nations to discipline Israel throughout her history. Because the pagan nations were ungodly, God brought vengeance upon them for harming His people (61:2). ***I will tread down:*** See 51:17; Ps 75:8; Jr 25:15; Rv 14:18-20. As one treads down the grapes in order to extract the grape juice, God would trample down Edom. In the same manner, Jesus, the King over all things, has trampled down the nations for the sake of the church (Jn 16:11; Rv 19:11-16).

PRAYER FOR PARDON & PRESERVATION

63:7-10 Isaiah here takes his place with the people of God, though he remains their prophet who laments their sin before God. ***Lovingkindness:*** God's grace in the history of Israel was steadfast and loyal. ***He was afflicted:*** When Egypt afflicted God's children, they afflicted God (Gn 15:13; Ex 1:8). ***Angel of His presence:*** Compare Ex 14:19; Jg 13:6; At 27:23. This is probably a reference to the Angel of the Lord (Gn 16:7; Nm 22:23; Jg 13:3), the preincarnate Son of God (See Ex 23:20-23; 32:34; 33:2). ***Fought against them:*** God is the enemy of those who work against His work (Lm 2:3-5; see Hb 10:31). Israel was the work of God to bring the Savior of all men into the world. But because of their apostasy, they worked against this plan. He worked against them with discipline in order to preserve a remnant that would remain in the land until the coming of the Messiah.

63:11-14 ***They remembered:*** In order for one to repent, it is necessary to remember the former times when one faithfully walked with God. When Israel, in her apostasy, remembered how God had brought the nation out of Egyptian captivity through the leadership of Moses, they yearned for those days. They yearned for God to work again in the nation in order to deliver them from their enemies. ***Where is He:*** God delivered them by bringing them out of the Red Sea. He sustained them by the Holy Spirit who worked within them. He defended them by bringing the waters of the Red Sea upon the Egyptian army. He did all this in order to give evidence to the world that He was the only God and that Israel was His people (Ex 9:16). ***Led them through the deep:*** God led Israel safely through the divided Red Sea, and then the wilderness for 40 years, in order to bring them to the land of promise.

63:15-19 These words were delivered to the people at a time of national calamity. Isaiah representatively speaks for the people as they face an uncertain future. ***Look down:*** He pleads for God's concern (See Ps 33:13,14). Feeling that God has distanced Himself from them, he pleads that God come down from heaven in order to deliver them. ***Your zeal and Your strength:*** As in the days when God with a strong arm delivered Israel out of Egyptian captivity, he asked that God deliver them again out of the certain peril in which they were at the time these words were written. ***You are our Father:*** Earthly fathers may forget their wayward children, but surely God would not forget His children of Israel. ***Our redeemer:*** See Jb 19:25; Ps 19:14; 73:35. God redeemed Israel out of Egyptian captivity. He was their Father, and thus the closest relative who would have the responsibility to redeem them, or purchase them out of slavery. ***Made us to stray:*** God allowed them to live in an environment wherein they would be tempted with apostasy. He knew that they would not destroy all the Canaanites from the land, so He allowed them to suffer from their own sin of not removing all the unbelievers from the land. God will take the responsibility for this historical failure on the part of Israel. However, He held them accountable for their free-will disobedience to His command to eradicate the Canaanites from the land. The inspired question here, therefore, is a complaint for allowing them to reside in a situation where they would be led astray. The answer to the question is that God allows His people to live in an environment wherein they can be tempted. If they fall, however, they will be held accountable for their sin, for God gave all men the ability to freely make choices concerning moral behavior. This scenario of a free-moral individual living in an environment where choices can be made was necessary in order that God stand just in final judgment. If one is condemned because he chooses to live in sin, then God is just for condemning one who freely made the choice to live in sin. ***Hardened our heart:*** Man hardens his own heart when with a rebellious attitude he rejects the will of God. The more one knowingly works against the will of God, the harder his heart becomes. Because Israel hardened her heart against God, she became as the unbelieving nations among whom God never worked directly as He did with Israel. She became no different than the Assyrians and Babylonians who led her away into captivity.

Chapter 64

64:1-7 This prayer is for God's intervention. And when God intervenes, all creation trembles. ***Split the heavens:*** Isaiah asked for another revelation of the presence of God as He appeared on Mt. Sinai before Israel. When the Creator of all things appears among those things that He created, they split, quake and tremble. The material world cannot bear the presence of God. God created natural laws in order to control the physical world. However, when He sets aside these natural laws, the physical world comes apart (Compare comments Hb 1:3). ***That the nations may tremble:*** The reason for the request for the presence of God was that those who threatened Israel might flee in terror. ***For which we did not look:*** Israel did not expect to see the awesome revelations of God that took place in their history when they came out of Egyptian captiv-

ity and made their way to Canaan. ***Mountains:*** Mt. Sinai, and the surrounding mountains, quaked when God appeared to Moses and all Israel. ***A God besides You:*** Herein is proof that God has never allowed Satan to work any miraculous wonders as those that have been worked by God. If God allowed Satan to miraculously work among men, then certainly He would be working inconsistently. God would never allow Satan to work in a manner that would cancel the evidence of His own miraculous work. Since all false gods are the imagination of men, then it is only men who imagine that there are miraculous workings in their lives that they attribute to Satan. It was the futile effort of the false prophets to convince men that their gods were working miracles among the people (See comments At 8:1-25). ***In them a long time:*** They continued in their rebellion for so long that their culture became the rebellion. Their self-imposed social morals became customary, and thus they were not able to return to the will of God (See Hs 13:2). They could not be saved from destruction if they continued to live after the moral standards that they had created for themselves. When immoral and unjust practices become the culture of the people, it is extremely difficult for the people to repent. ***Filthy rags:*** As the menstrual cloth was to be discarded, so their behavior that was contrary to the will of God was to be discarded (See Lv 15:19-24). ***No one who calls:*** They had fallen so far away from God that they no longer cried out to Him for help. They sought deliverance through their own plans and alliances with foreign governments instead of going to God for His deliverance. ***Consumed us:*** Their spiritual vibrance faded away. It withered as an autumn leaf.

64:8-12 Isaiah's plea is that as their Father, God not abandon them to the hands of their enemies. Since God is the potter (Jb 10:9), they must submit to His work of molding them. God had created them as a nation, and now the plea was that He preserve His creation. He would surely not destroy the work of His hands. ***Exceedingly angry:*** The prophet knew that if God's anger was unleashed, the nation would suffer total destruction. Isaiah is the mediator on behalf of the people. He sought for God's forgiveness on behalf of the nation. ***House ... is burned up:*** At the time the prophecy was written, the temple was standing. But as with other prophecies of Isaiah and the prophets, the prophet places himself in the time when the prophecy was fulfilled. In this case, Isaiah places himself in the time of the captivity in order to plead in advance for the restoration of the nation and rebuilding of the temple. Though the people did not believe that God would allow them to fall to the Assyrians and Babylonians, the power of the prophecy was in the fact that the prophet said that Jerusalem would fall, but later be rebuilt. The Bible interpreter must always keep in mind that Isaiah and the other prophets were inspired prophets of God. Their prophecies of things to come were from God, regardless of the belief of their immediate audiences. They must trust in God and not in self-made prophets.

Chapter 65

BLESSING OF THE FUTURE ISRAEL

65:1-7 ***I am sought:*** In the case of apostate Judah, God took the initiative to restore them to Him. In order to do this, He had to take them through the discipline of captivity. Before the captivities, and in their state of rebellion, they did not seek Him. However, He was always there. He had not left them in their darkest hour. The fact was that they had left Him. They searched for God, but they were searching in the wrong places (Compare Jn 5:39,40). ***Provoke Me to anger:*** Through their sin they provoked God to do what He had promised if they turned from Him. He was thus stirred to send them into captivity. They provoked Him by offering sacrifices to gods they had created after their own desires to follow after the lusts of the flesh and pride of life. ***Who sacrifice in gardens:*** Their gods were supposedly located in groves and gardens, places to which they went to offer sacrifices (1:29; 57:5; Ez 20:38). In such places they practiced all sorts of immoral sexual behavior. ***Remain among the graves:*** In seeking to communicate with the dead, they were in places where Jews were not to be. They did those things that were an abomination to the Lord. ***Lodge in monuments:*** This may have been locations to which they went to communicate with pagan gods. They involved themselves in various cults. ***Swine's flesh:*** See Lv 11:7. ***Keep to yourself:*** In their occult practices, they shunned one another. Some exalted themselves as holier than others because they were supposedly more in touch with the spirit world. ***Smoke in My nose:*** Because of their apostasy from the true God, they were an irritating stench in the nose of God. ***I will not keep silence:*** It was not that they became irreligious. They invented religion that was disgusting to God. They turned their focus from the true worship of the true God to gods they had created after their own imagination. Thus God would not allow such to go on in the nation, for He was using the nation of Israel as the means through which He would bring the Messiah into the world. He thus had to repay them for their iniquity and purify them as a nation (Jr 16:18).

65:8-12 ***I will bring forth a seed:*** In order to accomplish His plan through Israel, God did not need to preserve the entire nation. He needed only a remnant in order to continue the seedline promise that was made to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Therefore, God would preserve the good grapes from which to make new wine. ***From Judah:*** The Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. ***Heir of My mountains:*** Palestine was mountainous, and thus there would be a restoration to the land in order that God carry on with His promise that He made to the fathers. God would work through the faithful few, but discard the rest. ***Fortune ... Destiny:*** They worshiped the false gods of fate and good luck. Those who give up on God, often create philosophies of life that relegate men to their own fate. The modern-day equivalent to these gods would be beliefs in horoscopes and astrology. ***Destine you to the sword:*** The apostates were given over by God to destruction by the sword of the enemies of Judah.

65:13-16 God makes a declaration that the faithful would be spared, but the disloyal apostate would suffer calamity. ***Name for a curse to My chosen:*** The disloyal apostate will forever be a symbol of the judgment that God brings on the rebellious (See Nm 5:21; Jr 29:22; Zc 8:13). ***Another name:*** The faithful would be called by a new name, a name that

identified their faithfulness to Him (Compare 62:2; At 11:26). ***Blessed:*** God blesses those who are a blessing for Him in this world.

65:17-25 ***New heavens and a new earth:*** God would purge out of His people those who were rebellious. The new Jerusalem would be made up of those who willingly gave themselves to the Lord, as opposed to those who were physically born into national Israel, but later went into apostasy (See comments Jr 31:31-34). The new Jerusalem, the church, would be composed of those who made a free-will choice to submit themselves to God. The church would also be preserved because it would always be made up of those who were submissive to God. As opposed to God's efforts to preserve a nation, the spiritual nation of God would be preserved through the faithfulness of those who willingly serve God. Thus the church would be the new dwelling of His people. For the present church, He will create a new dwelling that is yet in the future into which the members will transition (Compare 2 Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1). ***The former things:*** In the new environment for His people, the sin and sorrow of the past will be forgotten. Pestilence and war will be forgotten. One will be able to live out the fullness of his life. People will enjoy the fruits of their labors. They will not be afraid of invading armies who would plunder their crops and produce. They will be able to consume the products of their farms and live long years as do trees. ***Bring forth for trouble:*** They will not bring forth children to bear the sword or to be consumed by the sword. ***Before they call I will answer:*** The time between the prayer and the answer would be short. God will know their needs, and bring the answer into existence even while they were in prayer (See comments Mk 11:24). ***Wolf and the lamb:*** The nature of man would be different. In national Israel men digress into being aggressive toward one another. But in the new Jerusalem men would be known for their love of one another (Jn 13:34,35). ***Serpent's food:*** Those who would bite to devour, would become harmless. ***My holy mountain:*** It is no longer the plural (mountains), referring to the land of Palestine. Reference is the mountain of God's strength through the new Jerusalem (See comments 2:1-4). The strength of God's work on earth is manifested to man.

Chapter 66
SINCERE WORSHIP

66:1,2 ***Throne ... footstool:*** All that man can see that exists is under the control of God (See Hb 1:3). ***Where is the house:*** Though this statement is definite, religionists of the world still seek to build sanctuaries in which to house God (See comments 1 Kg 8:27; 2 Ch 6:18; At 17:22-29; see comments Jn 4:22-24). Those of the new Jerusalem will not seek to build houses in which they might house God. ***Humble ... contrite spirit:*** God works for those who fear Him. He works for those who humble themselves before Him (See comments Mt 5:1-12).

66:3,4 ***They have chosen:*** When men choose to worship God according to their own religious systems, they worship Him in vain (See comments Mk 7:1-9). Even if one performs religious rites according to the word of God, if the rites are performed with an insincere heart, then one is offering an abomination to God. God will allow one to worship Him in vain. He will allow one to deceive himself into thinking that what he is religiously doing is right before Him. However, in the end the vain worshiper will be judged for not following God's definition of worship with a sincere heart (See comments 2 Th 2:9-12). ***I called:*** They did not answer because they were caught up in their own religiosity that they had invented after their own desires. One is self-deceived when he performs his own religious rites, thinking that such is sanctioned by God (Hb 3:13).

66:5,6 ***Who cast you out for My name's sake:*** The tragedy of those who are self-deceived is that they persecute those who are actually doing the work of the Lord. Religious people crucified Jesus. The same will happen to those who stand against the religious doctrines and traditions of men (Jn 3:20; 7:7; 15:18,19). Isaiah was a revolutionary in the time when the nation had already gone into apostasy. He preached a paradigm shift from apostasy to walking in the law of God. Eventually, he was rejected and killed by those to whom he was sent. The same happened to Jesus who came into the same situation (Mk 7:1-9). ***Noise from the city:*** For the righteous, the noise from God's presence was a time for joy. But for those who had created their religion by mixing what God required with the rituals of pagan gods, the sound from the temple was judgment. God would put to shame those who oppressed and persecuted those who stood for God's will. The thunderous noise came from the temple for it was there that they were syncretistic in their sacrifices, mixing pagan beliefs with sacrifices to God.

66:7-9 ***She gave birth to a boy:*** The birth of the church was without pain. In one day birth was given to the surprise of the world (See comments At 2). Nations are built through years of social struggle. But when God sent His Spirit, men and women responded in one day to the good news of Jesus. God had started the birth of the Messiah into the world when the gospel was first preached to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). For two thousand years He protected the seedline of Abraham in order to give birth to the Messiah, who in turn established the spiritual Israel of God in one day in A.D. 30.

66:10-14 See comments 2:1-4. ***Rejoice with Jerusalem:*** From Jerusalem the gospel of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope was first preached (See comments At 2). All Christians thus rejoice with Jerusalem, for from her went forth the gospel of Jesus. For Isaiah's immediate audience, there would come a time when the Jews would rejoice over Jerusalem because of the new thing that God would do in the city. ***Gentiles:*** Peoples from all nations would flow unto Jerusalem for the message of the gospel. She would be the mother's lap who would give comfort to her children by faith. God's hand would be upon those who are children of Abraham by faith. But His hand would be against those who were the enemies of God.

66:15-17 ***Plead with all flesh:*** Because God is not willing that any should perish, the message of the gospel goes unto all people. Those who do not respond have judged themselves for condemnation (Jn 12:48). Most people will not respond to

the plea of God. These are those who continue in idol worship and do abominable things.

66:18-21 ***I will gather all nations:*** This is the great commission from the prophetic lips of Isaiah (See comments Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). These are those who will come and will see the glory of God through Jesus Christ (Jn 11:4,40,55). ***Those who are delivered:*** Those who are delivered from their sins will be sent throughout the world (At 8:4). They will go forth to declare the glory of God among the nations. ***Bring all you brethren for an offering:*** See comments 2:1-4. ***Priests:*** See comments 1 Pt 5:2,9.

66:22-24 Those of the new Jerusalem, the new heavens and new earth, will continually worship before God (Rm 12:1,2). Worship will no longer be confined to a specific day of the week. It will be daily, from Sabbath to Sabbath (See At 5:42; see comments Rm 12:1,2). Those who would be cast out are those who refuse to obey the gospel (Mk 9:48). These would judge themselves condemned because they rejected the word of Jesus (Jn 12:48). The figure of the condemnation of the wicked is taken from the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) where the bodies of 185,000 dead Assyrians were burned. This historical event established the literal and real image upon which the Jews envisioned the hell to come. This will be the end of the wicked and their consumption in fire as the bodies in the Valley of Hinnom (Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:6-9). But the end of those who are obedient to the gospel will be eternal life in the presence of God (Mt 25:46). Isaiah concludes with a vision of the age on earth when the Son of Man would reign from heaven, which reign is taking place at this time. The manifestation of this reign is in the hearts of gospel-obedient disciples throughout the world. This era began with the gospel ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God. It will conclude when He comes again (See comments 1 Co 15:26-28). The Jews were thus left with a vision that encouraged hope for the future. With anticipation, they could look forward to something wonderful that God was going to do through the sending of the Branch, the Messiah who would bring hope through the revelation of the gospel.

Jeremiah

WRITER

Many Bible students have viewed Jeremiah as the weeping prophet of God. He is considered the weeping prophet because he was often despondent, discouraged and temperamental in reference to the burden of his mission to an apostate people who would not repent. However, when studying the book to its conclusion, he is a prophet of hope, regardless of the moral degradation of the generation in which he lived and the calamity he experienced in the fall of Jerusalem. He was emotionally concerned about the fate of Judah, but offered hope for the future. He was given the unfortunate privilege as a prophet to see the doom of the people of God because of their sin. But he was also given a message of hope beyond the doom. He was given a message of restoration under a new covenant and relationship with God. At the time of his ministry, he was viewed as a pessimistic prophet of misery by his contemporaries. But in reading the book, we can only view him as an astringent personality in a time of woeful sin among God's people, which sin resulted in their captivity and destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. He preached at the time of the end of a national independent Israel. We can understand his sadness as he saw and experienced the close of an Israel that would never exist again as an independent nation.

One would think that the personality of Jeremiah did not initially fit the message he had to proclaim. It was a time of international upheaval among the nations. God's people in the latter part of the 7th century, and beginning of the 6th B.C., were caught up in and tossed to and fro by the struggles of the time because of the turmoil that existed between the Assyrians, Egyptians and Babylonians. The Medo-Persian Empire was in its initial beginnings in the early part of the 6th century B.C. The conclusion to this international turmoil would be the captivity of God's people. In order to declare this message to Judah, the young, and often emotionally immature Jeremiah, was called (Compare 11:13-23; 12:1-6; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18). However, after years of confrontation with the false prophets of his time, and the leaders in government, Jeremiah matured into a strong leader for God who could stand alone against a nation of people that was destined for destruction.

BOOK

Jeremiah was born in a small village northeast of Jerusalem called "Anathoth" (1:1-3). Anathoth was possibly a Levitical city that dated back to the time of Joshua (Ja 21:18; see 1 Kg 2:26). Jeremiah's father was Hilkiah, who was possibly from a family of priests who had descended from Abiathar. Jeremiah's name means "the Lord has appointed," or "whom the Lord sends forth." It seems that he belonged to or was associated with the aristocratic class, moving among the princes and rulers of Judah. His ministry, therefore, took place primarily in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah was possibly called by God when he was in his early 20s. He was probably born somewhere between 650 to 645 B.C., during the latter years of the reign of Manasseh. He was called in the 13th year of Josiah. Since Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, he and Jeremiah were probably about the same age. We are not told exactly when he died. Some have asserted that he died in Egypt, while others have assumed that he escaped

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

from Egypt and fled to Babylon, where he died a natural death in his old age between 575 and 560 BC. Baruch was his personal scribe. He wrote Jeremiah's pronouncements throughout his ministry, and possibly composed the structure of the book as we have it now in our Bibles.

Jeremiah was contemporary with Huldah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, prophets in Judah, and with Ezekiel and Daniel among the captives in Babylon. Jeremiah's ministry lasted from 40 to 45 years. In the early part of his ministry, the Assyrian Empire was dominant in the Near East, but began a rapid decline after the death of Ashurbanipal in 626 B.C. In 612 B.C., Nineveh fell to a coalition of forces of the Babylonians, Medes and Scythians who were led by Nabopolassar, king of Babylon. At the time, the Egyptians and Babylonians were the contesting world powers for control of the Near East. When Nineveh fell, some of the Assyrian leaders fled to Haran and sought to reorganize remnants of the Assyrian army. They then sought an alliance with Pharaoh-necho of Egypt in order to withstand the forces of Nabopolassar. Pharaoh-necho heeded the call of the Assyrians, and thus marched his army up the west coast of Palestine toward Carchemish. On his way, Josiah, the king of Judah, presumptuously attacked the Egyptians at Megiddo, and consequently was defeated and killed. By this time Nebuchadnezzar had replaced his ailing father, Nabopolassar, and became the king of the Babylonians. One of the most decisive battles of history of the Near East was fought when the Babylonians encountered the Assyrian-Egyptian coalition at Carchemish. The Babylonians dominated the Assyrian-Egyptian forces at this battle in 606 B.C. (See 46:1,2). This brought the Babylonian Empire into firm control of all the regions of the former Assyrian Empire, and subsequently, Babylonia became the dominant empire of the Near East. It would be the Babylonians whom God would use to bring judgment on Judah because they had fallen into apostasy. The oracles of this book will define the depths to which they morally degenerated, even to the offering of their own children in human sacrifices (7:30,31).

Throughout the years of Jeremiah's ministry, the throne of Judah was in constant turmoil. Manasseh had just concluded 55 years of one of the most wicked rules of an Israelite king. The son of Manasseh, Amon, then came to the throne, but reigned only two years. Josiah succeeded Amon, and then initiated a religious restoration, though the restoration was more outward than an inward change in the hearts of the people (2 Kg 22:3 – 23:25). Josiah was unfortunately killed by the Egyptians at the battle of Megiddo (2 Kg 23:29). The people then selected Jehoahaz, his son, to reign (2 Kg 23:30-33). After only three months on the throne, Pharaoh-necho replaced him with Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah (2 Kg 23:34-37). Jehoiakim was a wicked king (22:13-19). In 598 B.C. Jehoiakim died and was replaced by his son, Jehoiachin. However, after reigning for only three months, the young Jehoiachin surrendered to the Babylonians and was taken into exile with 10,000 Israelites. The Babylonians then placed Zedekiah, a third son of Josiah, on the throne in Judah. Zedekiah eventually rebelled against the Babylonians, which resulted in the final siege of Jerusalem and its destruction in 586 B.C. Gedaliah was subsequently appointed by the Babylonians as governor of the region, but was eventually assassinated by rebellious Jews (41:1-3). It was at this time that a group of assassins fled to Egypt, taking the aged Jeremiah with them (43:5-7). Jeremiah's whereabouts after this is unknown, though tradition indicates that he may have made his way to Babylon, though this is uncertain.

Introduction & Call
(1:1-19)

Outline: (1) Introduction (1:1-3), (2) Calling and commission (1:4-19)

INTRODUCTION

1:1-3 There has been no question concerning the authorship of this book. Jeremiah was born of Hilkiah in the village of Anathoth (See Ja 21:18; 1 Kg 2:26,27). This Hilkiah played a predominant role in the discovery of the book of the law during the reign of Josiah (See comments 2 Kg 22). Jeremiah was probably about the same age as King Josiah when he began his ministry. ***To whom the word of the Lord came:*** God personally called Jeremiah for the ministry in order to deliver His final words to a nation that was coming to an end. The end of national Israel as an independent nation was at hand, and thus Jeremiah was personally called as a prophet who lamented over the doom of Israel as an independent nation. ***Thirteenth:*** Since Josiah began to reign when he was eight, then he would have been 21 years old when Jeremiah began his ministry. The date was around 626 B.C. His ministry continued to the days of King Zedekiah and the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Chapter 1
CALLING & COMMISSION

1:4-8 Jeremiah's call was indicated only by the fact that the word of the Lord came to him. God transcended the affairs of His people through Jeremiah in order to convey to them final words while they were still in the land of promise. ***Formed ... knew ... sanctified ... ordained:*** Before Jeremiah was born, God had chosen him for a special ministry to His people. We assume that he was brought forth for this special ministry to which God set him apart and commissioned him. ***Prophet:*** This is from the Hebrew word *nabi* that is used over 300 times in the Old Testament to refer to one who was sanctioned by God to speak forth the word of God. The emphasis was not so much on speaking of things to come in the future, but in teaching the will of God to the people in the present. However, most of the foretelling message of the prophets is recorded,

though the ministry of the prophets was to exhort the people to remain faithful to God and His law. ***To the nations:*** He was to be a prophet not only to Judah, but to all those nations who affected God's people in some way at this time in history. He would also speak of the doom of those nations who negatively affected God's people. ***I cannot speak:*** As Moses, Jeremiah knew his own inabilities, and thus sought to use them as a means by which to excuse himself from his initial calling (Ex 3). He confessed to his youth, and thus could not understand why God would call such a young person for such a great ministry. But God knows who we are before we discover ourselves (See Mk 10:40). He knows our abilities, though hidden from our own self perception, for He gave them to us. God had given Jeremiah all the gifts that were necessary for the ministry unto which He called him. ***Do not be afraid:*** From past history, Jeremiah knew what it meant to receive a call from God to be a prophet. He knew of the hard times of Isaiah and the other prophets who suffered death from the hands of fellow Israelites who refused to hear the word of God. ***Deliver you:*** God would keep this promise, and thus, would not allow Jeremiah to die an untimely death at the hands of those who opposed him. It is for this reason that we assume that he died a natural death in his old age.

1:9-12 ***Words in your mouth:*** The message came to Jeremiah by revelation, and was written by inspiration. It was not a message that originated from the prophet. God used the prophet as the medium through whom He communicated His word. ***Set you ... over the kingdoms:*** It was the authority of the word of God that set Jeremiah over the nations. He spoke the judgment of God that was to all the nations that affected Israel throughout her history. ***Destroy ... build:*** Because God was working to build and destroy nations, Jeremiah's pronouncements of this work of God was by revelation. The prophets could know the work of God among the nations only if they were told through revelation. Jeremiah came in a time when Judah had forgotten the word of God (Hs 4:6). Judah, the remnants of God's people in the land of Palestine, had given herself over to apostasy, and thus was not concerned for what Jeremiah had to say. Regardless of the resistance to his message, however, he had to speak the word of God. ***What do you see:*** The visions not only confirmed Jeremiah's calling, but also gave him a message. ***Almond tree:*** The first vision was a pun on the Hebrew word for almond, meaning "to wake" or "to watch." It was the first tree to bud in the spring. The meaning of the vision for Jeremiah was that God was awake in order to confirm His word of condemnation, for both His people and the nations who had attacked His people in the final years of their demise. Thus God was working among the nations in order to make sure that His pronouncements through the prophets were fulfilled.

1:13-19 ***Boiling pot:*** The second vision referred to God's judgment that was about to be poured out upon the nations. The historical background would be the times that immediately followed the death of Ashurbanipal, the king of Assyria. The Assyrian kingdom would fall, after which the Babylonian Empire would come upon the world scene. The Egyptians would be defeated at Carchemish with the remnants of the Assyrian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar would then begin his reign over the Near East. Judah and Jerusalem would not be spared. With a coalition of mercenaries from armies of the north, God would eventually move the Babylonians against Judah for her sin of running after other gods. After Jerusalem was destroyed, and the seventy years of captivity completed, then the Babylonians would be conquered by the Medo-Persians. ***Do not be dismayed:*** The calling to deliver such a harsh message of doom to Judah challenged the emotional strength of the young Jeremiah. God knew that Jeremiah would be hated and despised for what he had to say to the people. He knew that his life would be threatened. Nevertheless, the man of God must not be apologetic for the message that he must deliver, knowing that the message is from God. ***They will fight against you:*** When God's men deliver messages that the people do not want to hear, the people will fight against the speaker, not the message of the speaker. Those who are ignorant of the word of God, and have created religious traditions after their own desires, have no desire to listen to the word of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). In such situations, therefore, God's men must be confident. They must understand that the people are fighting against the word of God, and not against them personally, though the attacks of the rebellious will be against their person. ***Deliver you:*** God has not always delivered His messengers (See Hb 11:35-40). But in the case of Jeremiah, God knew that he needed the comfort of knowing that he would complete his mission. He would not succumb to the murderous hands of idol worshipers, but would live out his life.

The Sin Of Israel
(2:1 – 10:25)

Outline: (1) Apostasy of Israel (2:1 – 3:5), (2) Call to repentance (3:6 – 4:4), (3) Enemies of Israel (4:5 – 6:30), (4) The temple sermon (7:1 – 8:3), (5) Exhortations (8:4 – 10:25)

Chapter 2
APOSTASY OF ISRAEL

2:1-3 ***In the wilderness:*** When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness after they came out of Egyptian captivity, they were totally dependent on God. But once they were settled in the land of promise, they became self-sufficient. They no longer felt that they needed God for their survival. ***Betrothal:*** Israel became an unfaithful wife. She committed spiritual adultery with foreign gods in order to enhance her relationships with her trading neighbors.

2:4-8 Once Israel was secure, the people forgot the God who delivered them out of Egyptian bondage. They became self-sufficient, and thus gave themselves over to any concept of a god that would conform to their desires. They ran after false gods, giving the idol gods credit for what God had done for them in blessing them in the land. Their leaders led in the apostasy of the people, seeking to please the people according to their own desires. God did not do them wrong. Nevertheless, they were ungrateful for what He had done in giving them birth as a nation and blessing their years in the land.

2:9-13 ***My people have changed their Glory:*** Other nations did not change from one god to another, but Israel did.

They sinned by forsaking the true God who had so miraculously made Himself known to them. In forsaking God, they created other gods after their own imagination. They did this, not because God had forsaken them, but because they desired to be the master of their own lives. They created gods that would allow them to do their own will. ***Fountain of living waters:*** They left the fresh waters that came from God in order to drink the putrid waters of a stagnant cistern. All religiosity, therefore, that is not from God is putrid in His sight.

2:14-19 The northern kingdom of Israel had gone into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. Their captivity illustrated what would happen to the southern kingdom if they did not repent. Since God had done so many great things for Israel (the northern kingdom), then God asked Judah to determine the reason for which they went into captivity. ***Noph:*** This is Memphis of Egypt. Josiah was shamefully defeated at Megiddo, and subsequently killed by the army of Egypt (2 Kg 23:29,30). Judah was defeated by the Egyptians, and Israel went into captivity because she had forsaken the Lord. Regardless of their defeat by the Egyptians who had told Josiah not to engage them in battle, there was also a pro-Egyptian element among some in Judah. There was also a group who would trust in the Assyrians during the threat of the Babylonians. But dependence on foreign powers would not change their destiny of captivity that they had brought on themselves. ***Sihor:*** The Nile River. ***River:*** The Euphrates River. ***Forsaken the Lord:*** Judah did not learn from the example of her northern sister. Judah was following after the example of apostasy of Israel, and thus was headed in the same direction of captivity.

2:20-25 ***I have broken your yoke:*** God had given them freedom, but they had brought themselves into the bondage of their own religious beliefs. God will set us free, but we seek to bring ourselves into the bondage of our own selves. ***Though you wash yourself:*** Men cannot wash themselves of their own sin. Only God can cleanse us of sin, for sin is against God. But in order to be cleansed, we must repent. In order for Judah to escape her destiny of captivity, she must repent and return to God. Israel was planted as a good vine, but she produced a worthless vine. She was married to God, but she became a harlot. She was as a camel that broke loose and ran at will from her owner. As a donkey in heat, she ran to be satisfied by pagan gods. ***"I am not polluted":*** Judah's sinful culture was so far removed from the will of God that she did not realize that she was in rebellion against God. She no longer had a moral conscience that would bring her back to the will of God. People who have no moral conscience in reference to the word of God will not repent because of their ignorance of God's word. They had forgotten that to which they had to return (Hs 4:6).

2:26-28 Since their gods were the invention of their own minds which they created in order to live according to their own moral standards, then the challenge here by God is that they see if they can deliver themselves in the time of calamity. They had forsaken God's protection, and went after their own self-sufficiency. Now that they were in trouble, God challenged them to see if they could deliver themselves. Since their leaders had led them into national calamity, God challenged the people to look to such false leadership in order to be delivered.

2:29-37 ***In vain I have chastened your children:*** God sought their repentance by chastising them with famine and pestilence, but to no avail. The people even killed those men of God whom God had sent to turn them from their wicked ways. They killed the prophets and continued in their own sin. ***We are lords:*** A civilization is in a hopeless condition when the people reject God and establish for themselves their own moral laws. In this case, Judah refused to have the knowledge of God in their lives in order to live by their own moral standards (See comments Hs 4:6). ***I am innocent:*** One cannot claim innocence when he seeks to remain ignorant of the presence of God. God created us to search after Him (See comments At 17:26,27; Rm 1:20). If we do not search for Him, then we will be held accountable for our own behavior. Jeremiah was sent to take away their ignorance through the preaching of the word of God. Through him God was speaking His will and informing the people of their coming doom. They could not, therefore, claim ignorance when calamity came. The very existence of Israel was grounded in the miraculous work of God. If the nation had forgotten the law of God, at least the people could have resorted to the oral truth of the fathers. This would have at least led them to seek out the word of God in order to restore themselves to His moral standards. But their desire to live according to their own moral codes was greater than any search for God and His will. Because they refused to have God in their knowledge, they would be brought to shame by the Egyptians and Babylonians as the northern kingdom had already been brought to shame by their captivity by the Assyrians.

Chapter 3

3:1-5 Judah had polluted herself with spiritual adultery. Her repentance would not be easy, for it would take a paradigm shift from her culture of sin in order to return to God. The illustration of returning to a divorced wife illustrated the fact that Judah's sin would forever wound her innocence (See Hs 2:1-5; 9:1). When one wanders in the wilderness of sin, he is wounded for life because of the sin. Repentance and forgiveness can restore one to the family of God, but the forgiven sinner will have to live with the scars of sin for the rest of his life (Compare comments 1 Tm 1:15,16). ***Will He remain angry forever:*** Josiah's reforms produced some surface results. However, the repentance of the people was shallow. After Josiah was killed by Pharaoh-necho, the people soon went back to their former apostate culture. It would have taken two to three generations before a true restoration of the culture to have been completed. The outward performance of tearing down the idols and banning the priests of the false gods was only a temporary restoration on the part of the people. Because they did not repent in their hearts and change their behavior, they were soon back in sin and destined for captivity.

CALL TO REPENTANCE

3:6-10 Judah could see the bad example of her northern sister. Yet she did not learn from the apostasy and captivity of the northern kingdom. She too committed harlotry with idols. For this reason, Judah was more accountable because she had

the example of sin and judgment that came upon the northern kingdom, but did not take heed to the warnings. ***Bill of divorcement:*** God divorced the northern kingdom, and thus allowed her to be taken by another, the Assyrian Empire. ***But in pretense:*** The outward reforms of Josiah did not reach to the heart of the people (See 2 Kg 22 & 23). As a result, Judah soon returned to the wayward behavior that was characteristic of her northern sister before she was taken into Assyrian captivity. Without bringing forth the fruit of repentance, superficial repentance profits little.

3:11-18 ***More righteous than treacherous Judah:*** Because Judah had the example of the consequences of Israel's sins, she was more accountable. ***Return, backsliding Israel:*** It is important to understand that in this context the term "Israel" refers to the northern kingdom. ***I will take you, one from a city and two ... and I will bring you to Zion:*** The northern ten tribes, Israel, were promised that a remnant of their families would be restored from their captivity. When the eventual return of the captives came after the fall of the Babylonian Empire to the Medo-Persians, a remnant of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel were restored as one people to the land of Palestine. There were no lost tribes from which a remnant did not return. God kept this promise that He made to the repentant remnant of all twelve tribes. ***They will say no more, "The ark of the covenant":*** God never intended that the ark of the covenant be permanently located in Jerusalem. It was not in His plan that the temple be built, or that Jerusalem be the center of government for His people. All these things were concessions that God allowed for the people and David after they had been in the land for several centuries. He originally planned that the ark be moved among the tribal territories, with the continual relocation of the tabernacle on a regular basis (Compare comments Dt 12:21). But this changed when David permanently located the ark in Jerusalem, and Solomon later built the temple. Judah thus took possession of the ark, the symbol of the presence of God. This action marginalized the northern tribes from access to the ark. In the new order, however, this would change. No longer would the presence of God be symbolized by the location of the ark. No longer would the temple be the center of their religion, though they would rebuild it. God would be in their hearts wherever they were. That which spiritually divided the people would be taken away, and thus they would be one as a nation in spirit and worship. They would once again view the throne of God to be in heaven, and not in Jerusalem (Compare comments Jn 4:19-24). It would be to heaven they would look for God, not to any man-made structures on earth, though Jerusalem would play an important part in the restoration to come and God's initiation of the new order (See Is 2:1-4). ***They will come together:*** A remnant of all twelve tribes would restore the unity of Israel as they came from the former Assyrian and Babylonian territories back into the land of their inheritance, and to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple (See comments Er & Ne).

3:19-25 It brought pain to the heart of God to watch His people go into spiritual adultery. Nevertheless, He had a plan that would bring them back and unite them as one people. In order to produce permanent repentance, however, there would be great pain on the part of backsliding Israel. They had to suffer the pain of captivity. It took captivity for Israel to realize the futility and foolishness of idol gods. Once they confessed to the foolishness of their idolatry, they were ready to be restored to the land of their inheritance. However, the first generation of captives never saw the land again. It was only their children and grandchildren who were released by the Medo-Persians and allowed to return to Palestine. Because of their idolatrous thinking and practices, the generation that first went into captivity had to die in captivity.

Chapter 4

4:1,2 Their repentance involved a total commitment to God. They had to turn from following after their own desires (idol worship) and return to obedience to the law of God. There had to be a change in attitude and in behavior. ***Will not be moved:*** If they repented, they would not be removed from the land and taken into exile. ***Swear:*** They had to make an oath that there was only one true and living God. Making the oath meant that they bound themselves to follow the law of God.

4:3,4 When Josiah broke down the idols and cut down the groves where they worshiped their false gods, it was only a superficial restoration. God here calls on them to go deeper in their thinking by changing their hearts. The old idol thinking in their hearts must be cut off and cast away. Changing religious ceremonies does not produce repentance. Josiah changed the ceremonies, but the people had not changed their hearts. ***Circumcise:*** There was more to circumcision than a sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Dt 30:6). When an Israelite child was circumcised on the eighth day, he was in a covenant relationship with God. When Israel went after the worship of other gods, it was treason against the covenant. It was now time to be circumcised again in their hearts in order to renew their devotion to God (9:26; 33:7-9; compare Rm 2:25-29; Gl 5:6; Cl 2:11).

ENEMIES OF ISRAEL

4:5-9 The Assyrians had come from the north and taken the northern kingdom into captivity in 722/21 B.C. The same would happen to Judah. The Babylonians would come around the Fertile Crescent and descend on Judah from the north. Since Judah would not repent, it was a time for them to sound the call for battle, for their judgment was coming upon them.

4:10 This was what the false prophets were saying to the people. They taught that Jerusalem would never fall.

4:11-18 In this section Jeremiah resumes his pronouncement of judgment upon Judah. Jeremiah perceived the impending danger that was manifesting itself in the city of Dan at the northern extremity of Palestine. The proxy judgment of God through the Babylonians was on its way to Jerusalem. The Assyrians and Egyptians had been defeated at Carchemish by the coalition of nations from the east that was led by Nebuchadnezzar. And now, the king of Babylon had his eyes set on Judah, who through Josiah had previously sided with the Assyrians and Egyptians. With the defeat of the Assyrian/Egyptian coalition at Carchemish, the international stage was set for the demise of Judah and the eventual destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The false preachers in Jerusalem had

promised the people that the city would never fall. But God revealed to Jeremiah that it was doomed.

4:19-22 The revelation of the doom of Judah and Jerusalem greatly affected Jeremiah. Because God had revealed that national Israel as an independent nation was coming to an end, he lamented over the city and the people. He cried out for the people to repent in order that the city might be spared. But his cries were to no avail.

4:23-26 These passages seem to be eschatological. Jeremiah looks back to the beginning of time in order to see the future. As nothing existed in the past before the creation, so nothing will be left after God's final judgment of the world (Compare comments 2 Pt 3). Sin would eventually cause a cataclysmic destruction that would come upon all the world. Sin caused the fall of Israel. It will eventually lead to the end of the world. The destruction of the existing world, however, meant the deliverance of the people of God. In order for God's people to be truly delivered, sin must be taken away.

4:27-31 Since Judah's sin had gone to the point where the people would not repent, then God's judgment could not be stopped. Their apostasy had become their culture, and thus they would not return from their ways. As an immoral woman, the virginity of Judah had been spoiled. She had laid with idol gods and corrupted herself with foreign idolatry. There was now no recourse except captivity that would result in a new birth for the people. The old Israel must die in the bondage of captivity in order to be reborn through the restoration of a repentant generation. The old Jerusalem was as a woman in labor, agonizing in order to give birth to a new Jerusalem that would eventually come. The old Jerusalem would die in the process of giving birth to the new Jerusalem.

Chapter 5

5:1-6 Jeremiah was placed in the same dilemma as Abraham in Genesis 18. He was sent to find anyone in Jerusalem who would execute justice or seek the truth. There were many who proclaimed, "The Lord lives." However, such pious words came from the mouths of those who paid only lip service to God. The fact was that Jeremiah searched in vain and found no one who had a godly heart and was searching for the truth of God. ***Harder than a rock:*** God had afflicted them with famine, pestilence, calamity and national defeat by their enemies. But they had moved so far from God that they did not realize that such acts of discipline on the part of God were actually from Him. They were thus hardened to correction and would not repent. Only people with a conscience for God will respond to chastisement. Because God could find no righteous people in the city who would respond to His chastisement, the city was doomed. ***Broken the yoke:*** They had broken from God and were running wild with idolatry. Since they had turned from God, they fell victim to every sort of falsehood (Compare comments Ep 4:12-16). Those who give up the truth give themselves over to believing lies.

5:7-9 Since their apostasy was against God, God asked if He should pardon them of their sin. They had committed spiritual adultery by following after the harlotry of the pagan gods to whom they had given themselves. Because they had given themselves to such gods, they behaved immorally according to the lust of their own flesh. Their apostasy, therefore, demanded that punishment follow in order that God stand as a just God. They had to be held accountable for their apostasy.

5:10-14 ***Strip away:*** They were to be cut back to the roots. In order for a new plant to grow from the roots, the old Judah of sin had to be completely taken away. Only their children and grandchildren would return from the captivity. ***The prophets will become wind:*** The people had believed the false prophets who proclaimed peace. Jeremiah stood alone against the declarations of these imposters. He reminded the people that the word of God was not in their false prophets who spoke for their own gain. Time would prove Jeremiah correct. Sometimes God's speakers must speak the truth, knowing that they will be proved true many years later. ***Words ... fire:*** God's word is always a consuming fire that is unleashed on the wicked (Hb 4:12). In this case, God's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem would literally come to pass. According to the prophecy of Jeremiah, the Babylonians would burn the city, which thing they did in 586 B.C.

5:15-18 ***I will bring a nation:*** God would bring the Babylonians from the north in order to exercise His destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. They will come with a great army and arrows that will kill many. They will devour the land, taking captive their sons and daughters. The picture here is of a cruel army of Scythians and Chaldeans who would have no mercy on the Jews. ***I will not make a full end:*** Though the Israelites would come to a disastrous end, there would be hope. A remnant would be spared. However, they would not realize the fulfillment of this promise until many years later when the remnant would be allowed to return to Palestine.

5:19-31 When they eventually asked why God allowed calamity to come upon the nation, they would ask how God could be justified in allowing such to happen. The first reason why God allowed such to happen was that they had forsaken God and ran after idols they had created in order to satisfy their own desires. ***Foolish people:*** The second reason was an indictment against their character. They exercised little common sense in reference to obedience to the will of God. When they reviewed the work of God in their history, they should have been moved to be loyal to Him. ***Will you not tremble:*** The third reason they went into apostasy was that they ceased to fear God. And since they had no fear of God, they did not believe that He would punish them for their apostasy. Instead of having a reverent heart for God, they manifested a spirit of rebellion. ***Wicked men:*** The fourth reason for their judgment was that they became a morally debased people. They became a society of social injustice. ***Prophets prophesy falsely:*** The fifth thing that led to their destruction was in reference to their religiosity. They had created a false religion that was propped up by preachers who preached what the people wanted to hear. And what the people wanted to hear was perverse. Their moral degradation was condoned by religious leaders who would not stand against their morally perverse society. Because the people loved their way of life, they would not tolerate any preacher who would speak against their sin. Their end was destruction because they were beyond any moral conscience that would move them to

return to God (Ep 4:19; 1 Tm 4:1,2). They were so morally degraded that they did not realize they were lost.

Chapter 6

6:1-8 What is stated in these verses is revelation from God. Jeremiah pictures the city of Jerusalem under siege. He first pictures the fact that the inhabitants should flee. ***Children of Benjamin:*** Jerusalem was within the tribal territory of Judah and Benjamin. The remnants of the Benjaminites are told to flee. ***Beth-haccerem:*** This was possibly a high point outside Jerusalem from which warning was given of approaching enemies. ***Tekoa:*** Tekoa was south of Jerusalem. It was a place of many caves where people could hide. ***Pitch their tents:*** The siege begins. There was an effort to take the city by surprise, but this failed. Then a plan was devised to take it by night, but this effort failed. The enemy then cut down trees and built ramps against the walls and gates. ***This is the city to be visited:*** As a well keeps her water fresh, so Jerusalem kept her wickedness active and fresh in order to reap the just judgment of God. ***Full of oppression:*** The culture was morally corrupt. It was beyond moral repentance, and thus deserving of termination. The citizenship was plagued with crime and corruption, and in bondage to its own sinful ways. Once a society becomes the victim of its own moral degradation, then it is given over by God to complete destruction. The few righteous people who live in such a society unfortunately have to suffer among those who have given themselves over to wickedness. ***Be instructed:*** This is the plea of God to every society. Only by being instructed in the moral standards of God, by which a society can repair itself, is there the possibility for a better society. Only when civic leaders stand up to the moral decay of their societies can there be leadership that will change the destiny of the people. In this case, the leaders refused to listen to God, and thus the nation was coming to desolation.

6:9-15 ***Thoroughly glean:*** In chapter 5 the vines were to be cut down to the root. The vineyard is to be thoroughly picked. The punishment of Judah is to be thorough. The consequences of her sin resulted in the severity of her destruction. The extent to which God took them in destruction indicates the extent to which they went in moral decay. ***I am full of the fury:*** As Moses, Jeremiah pled for the people. He knew that their moral degradation was so vile that they deserved the just punishment that God would render. Nevertheless, he was greatly moved because of his love for the people. The revelation that came to him from God greatly disturbed him because he was given a vision of the cessation of Israel as an independent nation. It was too much for him to fully comprehend. Nine hundred years of history and the existence of Israel as a free nation was coming to an end. A nation was born out of Egyptian captivity, and now it was to die. It was too much for the young prophet to comprehend. ***Ear is uncircumcised:*** They were spiritually deaf. ***Word ... reproach:*** They scorned the preaching of the word of God. The words of Jeremiah irritated them. ***Covetousness:*** They were greedy for the things of this world, which greed moved them to idolize possessions. ***Prophet ... priest:*** Their religious leaders sought their own financial well-being. They spoke lies in order to maintain their positions among the people. They should have been warning the people of destruction because of their sin, which thing was spoken in the law. But they had become ignorant of the word of God, and thus convinced the people that Jerusalem would never fall. These religious leaders were so morally vile that they themselves no longer blushed at the open immorality of the people. Because they had no moral courage, they too would be swept away in the coming destruction. Jeremiah's ministry is the same as the sincere evangelist today. He knows that the world is coming to an end with a great destruction (See comments 2 Pt 3). When Jesus comes, it will not be a time of peace for the world. It will be a time of destruction (See 2 Th 1:6-9). There are false prophets who are saying that Jesus will come to bring peace on this earth. But to the contrary, when He comes again He is coming with destruction. Those who are preaching peace on earth when Jesus comes are deceiving the people. Since the true evangelists of God know that Jesus will be the revelation of the wrath of God upon all wickedness, they too lament as Jeremiah over those in the world who will face a consuming fire (Mt 25:41). They lament that Jesus is coming to take vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel (See comments 1 Pt 4:11).

6:16-21 ***Ask for the old paths:*** This was the only escape route. God was referring to their old ways of living righteously in a covenant relationship with Him. To find their way out of darkness, they had to seek the way back to righteous living through the word of God. But here, the old paths referred to behaving according to the word of God. The old behavioral patterns were good because they were right. ***We will not walk:*** The proof that they had gone beyond repentance was in the fact that they refused to do that which was right. The prophets were preaching the old paths, but the people would not listen. They were thus without excuse. They could not claim that they were ignorant of the right ways of God. ***Watchmen ... trumpet:*** On several occasions God had sent His prophets to preach the right ways to the people. But they refused to listen to the prophets. As a result, God called on all the nations to assemble and see that He had spoken the right ways to His people, but they refused to listen. Therefore, He was a just God in bringing condemnation upon them. ***Incense from Sheba:*** It was not that they became irreligious. They brought into their religiosity practices from the nations around them. Because they had mixed the pagan practices of the religions of the nations with what God had commanded through the law, their religiosity became unacceptable to God. ***You will find rest for your souls:*** This could happen only if they looked for and practiced the old paths. They must walk in the paths of God's truth and righteousness. Only when one does this will he truly have peace with God.

6:22-26 The enemy that would be coming from the north, the Chaldeans and Scythians, would without mercy bring down judgment upon Judah. ***Our hands wax feeble:*** The army that was coming upon them was so great that Judah's army would be terrified by their presence. The danger would be so great that the people would confine themselves to the city. No one would venture outside to gather grain and fruits from the crops. Thus with great lamentation Jeremiah cried out to the inhabitants

of the city. He urged them to put on robes of repentance and ashes of mourning. Doom was imminent and the people must respond with fear of God, for only God could deliver them.

6:27-30 ***Tower and fortress:*** God placed Jeremiah as the only hope for the people. If the people listened to him, then their defense against the army of the Babylonians would be successful. The people were going to be refined as ore. The bellows would increase the fire and purify the ore. However, because the people were rebellious and stiffnecked, they would be poured off as useless slag in the process of refining. They were rejected, therefore, because they did not respond to God's process of refining them.

Chapter 7
THE TEMPLE SERMON

Some have believed that the message of this chapter was given in the first part of the reign of Jehoiakim (608 B.C.). The result of the message was explained in chapter 26. But it is also possible that the message was given in the last years of Josiah, with similar thoughts given at a later date.

7:1-15 This message was delivered at the temple gate. The time of deliverance may have been during one of the national festivals. ***Amend:*** Jeremiah's call for a change in their behavior. Their repentance must be more than the outward reformation of ceremonies as that which took place during the days of Josiah when he destroyed the places of idol worship throughout Judah. Their repentance must be sincere and from the heart. The exhortations that Jeremiah makes in verses 4-9 indicate the moral low to which they had digressed to be considered such a vile society. But because God was calling on them to repent, they could be assured that God still cared for them and sought their good. ***This house:*** They were incredibly audacious. They did all those things that were against the law of God, and yet came to the temple that had been dedicated to God. They were as the Pharisees and priests who crucified Jesus. They planned and executed a murder scheme, but would not take back the thirty pieces of silver they had given to Judas to betray Jesus (Mt 26:15; 27:3-8). Taking back the money into the temple treasury was against the law. Legalistic religious leaders with evil motives will always be inconsistent in their application of the law. They will break the law in order to keep their own law and traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9). ***Den of robbers:*** They were religious leaders who clung to their positions in order to maintain their financial security (See Mt 21:13). They used the religious spirit of the people as an opportunity to be supported full-time. ***The temple of the Lord:*** Since they believed that God would not allow the temple to be destroyed, they concluded that God would never allow Jerusalem to fall. But the people were trusting in the lying words of their false prophets. ***Shiloh:*** Jeremiah reminded them of their history. The ark was at one time placed in Shiloh (1 Sm 4). The people subsequently made Shiloh a sacred place. But eventually, Shiloh was destroyed. God would do the same to Jerusalem, regardless of whether the ark was in the city. Man should never make any place sacred, and thus assume that God condones his desire for holy places. God's throne is in heaven. ***I will cast you out:*** They had the example of their northern ten tribes who were taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. God said that the same would happen to Judah.

7:16-20 ***Do not pray for this people:*** Jeremiah was moved to pray for the people. But sometimes a people are beyond prayer (See comments 1 Jn 5:16,17). If they were set in sin, then they did not deserve the prayers of a righteous man. They were beyond any request that God would answer for their deliverance. ***In the streets:*** The people had become so accustomed to their idol gods that they openly made sacrifices to them in the streets of Jerusalem. ***Queen of heaven:*** This is possibly a reference to Ishtar, a Babylonian fertility goddess. ***My fury will be poured out:*** Their brazen sin could not go unpunished.

7:21-28 ***Your burnt offerings:*** There is sarcasm in these words. Performing the ceremonies of religion will not keep one from apostasy. And when one is in apostasy, keeping religious ceremonies will not bring him back to God. The burnt offerings were to be offered completely to God. Nothing was to be eaten by the people as with the other offerings. The peace offering was to be eaten by the people. In this rebuke, Jeremiah stated that they might as well put the burnt offering with the peace offering and eat the whole thing. Neither offering was made to restore their relationship with God. God had rejected all their offerings because they had been brought before Him with an insincere heart. When God brought them out of Egypt, He commanded them to obey His laws concerning the sacrifices. Their offering of the sacrifices, therefore, was evidence of their obedience. They had to obey the law concerning the sacrifices in order to manifest their loyalty to His law. But such loyalty had long passed from Israel. ***Imagination of their evil heart:*** They created gods that would condone their evil desires. God had given them laws to obey in order to proclaim their loyalty to Him. But they combined the sacrifices commanded by God with the sacrifices of their idol gods. God then sent His prophets to remind them of the purpose for which His sacrifices were given. But they rejected and killed the prophets. There was nothing else that God could do to turn them back. ***Worse than their fathers:*** They continued on a moral spiral downward. There was no turning back, and thus they were ripe for destruction. ***They will not hearken:*** They had morally degenerated to the point of no return. As Isaiah's mission to the northern kingdom (Is 6), so was Jeremiah's to the south. Both preached to a stubborn people who had hardened their hearts against God. The prophets preached, but there would be no response to their sermons.

7:29-34 ***Cut off your hair:*** This message was addressed to Jerusalem. The cutting of the hair was an act of mourning. In this case, they were to mourn over their sin. They should mourn over the fact that they had set up idols to false gods in the temple that was constructed to honor God. By doing such, the religious leaders were forcing the people to honor the inventions of men. They had built an altar to Molech, the god of the Moabites (2 Kg 21:5). They had involved themselves in human sacrifices. The location for these atrocities was Tophet. It would eventually be called the Valley of Slaughter. It would be named such because many Israelites would die there during the siege of Jerusalem. Another reason they should

mourn is that in the day of their destruction there would be so many killed that the dead would not be buried. The beasts and birds would feed upon them. There would be no one left in the land to scare away the predators. In the destruction of the city, the enemies of Judah would desecrate the tombs of the former kings and princes of Israel. Their bones would be scattered under the heavenly bodies that they formerly worshiped.

Chapter 8

8:1-3 Jeremiah here concludes the horror that was pictured in the preceding message. Those who escaped death during the destruction would go into exile. However, their exile would be so terrible that they would have wished that they had been killed in the destruction of Jerusalem.

EXHORTATIONS

8:4-7 Israel's apostasy was unnatural. If one would fall down, he would naturally get up. But not Judah. They fell into sin, but would not return to God, for they had no desire to turn to that which Jeremiah preached. Instead, the people continued to backslide. They ran in their sin as a horse into battle, not knowing the peril that awaited them. The stork and swallow obey inborn instincts. Judah, however, had lost her moral compass. She established a culture of sin, and thus was content to continue in wickedness, for she thought that her behavior was not contrary to the word of God.

8:8-13 The people were the victims of their religious leaders. The scribes had twisted the law, and the false prophets and priests dealt falsely with the people. They preached peace when the nation was headed for destruction. Though the leaders twisted the Scriptures, the people were at fault for not checking their teachings with the word of God. God's judgment of the supposedly wise religious leaders would thus be harsh. He would give their wives to others. ***Not at all ashamed:*** This reveals how hardened they had become. Their consciences had been seared with self-deception. Judah had thus become a worthless vine and fig tree. She could bring forth no generations that would bring glory to God. The people had rejected the law of God that would have preserved them in the land. But now, they had digressed to the point that they were no longer good for producing a posterity of righteousness in their children. Before the disease of their sin was passed on to another generation, it was time for them to suffer the calamity of national destruction.

8:14-17 It seems that the farming people were more perceptive of the impending danger than those who lived in the city. They put their trust in fleeing to the fortified cities in times of peril. But there they would face death. They might hope for better times, but there were no better times to come. The enemy of the north was already on its way. Jeremiah speaks in a verb tense as if it had already happened. Thus it was too late for repentance. The time had come for the land to be devoured. The enemy was as a serpent that could not be charmed, but would eventually bite.

8:18-22 The fate of the people greatly disturbed Jeremiah. He had seen a terrible future for the people. It was the end of an independent national Israel. No more would the Jews be an independent nation in their own land. They would always be controlled or occupied by other nations. But Jeremiah's cry to the Lord was answered with a question. Jeremiah must discern why they had provoked God to anger. ***Harvest is past:*** They failed in their opportunity to repent. ***Summer is ended:*** They had neglected the opportunity to produce righteousness. ***Not saved:*** And now it was time to reap what they had sown. ***I am hurt:*** Jeremiah lamented the certain doom of his people. He complained by asking if there were no healing left in Gilead. Gilead was known for the production of a balm that was made from the resin of the mastic tree. There was healing still available. There was still a physician to heal the sick. But Jeremiah wondered why there was no healing. The people were not healed because they did not seek the balm. They did not seek the great Physician. In the stubbornness of their rebellion, they had lost the opportunity to heed the pleas of God that they turn from their sin.

Chapter 9

9:1-8 ***Fountain of tears:*** Jeremiah was indeed the weeping prophet of Judah. He saw so much sin, and was told so much calamity that was in the future, that he could not contain himself. ***Lodging place:*** Jeremiah was so stunned by the destruction that was coming that he sought to escape. His stress had driven him to his emotional limits. He wanted God to take him to a wilderness. He had been shunned and abused by the people because of his message. ***Adulterers ... treacherous:*** They were spiritual adulterers in that they had married themselves to false gods. They were a generation of liars. Neighbors could not trust one another. ***Supplant:*** This is the same Hebrew word that is used for "Jacob." They were as Jacob, who dealt treacherously, in order to gain an economic advantage over one another (See Gn 27). ***Taught their tongue:*** They lived in a culture of deceit, and thus those who were born into the culture grew up learning how to deceive. It was a culture that was built on deceit, and thus neighbors could not trust one another.

9:9-11 ***Weeping and wailing:*** The devastation that was to come was revealed to Jeremiah. He responded as many evangelists today to whom the destruction of the world has been revealed in the word of God (2 Th 1:6-9; 2 Pt 3). He responded with weeping and wailing, knowing that destruction is coming, not peace. In Jeremiah's prophecy, it was revealed that the land would be totally devastated. He saw Jerusalem lying in a heap of ruins. It would become a place for roaming jackals. And such did the Babylonians to Jerusalem and Judah in 586 B.C. when they destroyed the city.

9:12-16 ***Wise man:*** The people were without spiritual understanding simply because they had forgotten the law of God (Hs 4:6). They were so caught up in their affairs of life that they did not take time to ask questions concerning the destruction that was coming upon them. ***No one passes through:*** Palestine was the major trade route between the countries to the north and Egypt to the south. Normally, there were traders continually going through the land. But this had all stopped. No one was asking questions concerning why. The reason was that the Near East world at the time was in international

turmoil with conflicts between the Babylonians, Assyrians and Egyptians, all of whom struggled for control of Palestine. All trade had stopped in the region. ***After the imagination of their own heart:*** Herein lies the problem with a society that is so obsessed with consuming the things of the world. Their minds were not on spiritual things, but on things of this world. They were concerned with only the present, not with the impending danger of the international turmoil that would eventually bring destruction to the gates of Jerusalem. ***Wormwood ... gall:*** They would be given to great sorrow and suffering because of their apostasy from God. They would be scattered among the nations as captives. Their end was near, but they were so consumed with their own selfish interests that they paid no attention to the international turmoil that was occurring among the nations.

9:17-22 ***Mourning women:*** These were women who were called to mourn in times of grief. The times were so severe that God told Jeremiah to call in women to mourn over the dire situation of Judah. The purpose of the mourning women was to stimulate mourning in the lives of others. God went to this length to stimulate mourning over Jerusalem. But it was to no avail. The people were simply indifferent to the impending destruction. ***We are plundered:*** The possessions of the people of the countryside had been plundered. But the calamity that was to come was to be worse than the loss of possessions. There would be the loss of life, the captivity of women and children, and the end of national Israel as an independent nation. The dead would be so great in number that no one would be able to bury them. They would be left to rot in the sun, eaten by birds and beasts. Death is personified by Jeremiah as one who goes about seeking to kill. This is the one who reaps the harvest of humanity.

9:23,24 Judah had taken pride in her human wisdom, defenses and material prosperity. But all these things were worthless in defending one against the power of God. Jeremiah warned that they should not take courage in the proclamations of their supposed wise men. On the contrary, they should take pride in grace, righteousness and just judgment. It is upon these virtues that great nations are built.

9:25,26 ***I will punish:*** God is not a respecter of persons. Therefore, being a Jew was no guarantee that one would be treated with greater respect in judgment. The Jews, therefore, had no advantage over the Gentiles when it came to the judgment of God. The most important thing to remember is obedience to the word of God (1 Co 7:19). If one does not obey God, whether he is circumcised or uncircumcised, then he will suffer the judgment of God. In reference to Judah, the meaning is that religious ceremonies of the law do not give one an advantage over the Gentiles to whom the ceremonies of the law were not given. God judges according to our hearts, not according to our performance of religious ceremonies.

Chapter 10

10:1-16 ***House of Israel:*** It is not certain whether Jeremiah was addressing all Israel, or just the ten northern tribes who had already been taken into Assyrian captivity. If he was addressing the northern kingdom, then he was exhorting them to remain faithful to the Lord while in captivity. ***Do not learn the way of the heathen:*** While in exile, it would be tempting to appease one's captors by paying homage to their idol gods. Since Israel was taken into captivity because she did such in Palestine, Jeremiah urged the people to refrain from continuing idol worship in captivity. They must be reminded that giving homage to such false gods was useless. Jeremiah then described the foolishness of idol making. Idols cannot speak or go anywhere. They can do nothing. They are stupid and foolish. The only power of an idol, or fetish, is in the minds of those who make them. Idols are made in order to reinforce the misguided minds of those who make and honor them. They are physical representations of those who are ignorant of the true and living God. ***King of the nations:*** God was not only the king of Israel, but all nations of the world. Since He is the king of the nations, then all nations should give honor to Him. He is the source of wisdom and knowledge. The god that is represented by every idol can be understood simply because the idol god is the product of the human mind. But the God who created all things is beyond our full comprehension. Men make idol gods. But the God of all things created the minds of men.

10:17-22 Jeremiah seems to go into a dialogue with a personification of Jerusalem. In the dialogue, the inhabitants of the city are commanded to take up their baggage for they are going on a journey into exile. ***Sling out the inhabitants:*** This is strong language, indicating that God extracted the inhabitants of Jerusalem and threw them as stones from a sling into distant lands. The city responded with dismay, mourning her loss and calamity. She complained about her leaders who were too inept to gather the scattered flock. A great commotion was heard from the north, indicating that the armies of God's judgment were on their way to the city.

10:23-25 In view of the calamity that was coming upon God's people and Jerusalem, Jeremiah was humbled to prayer. He perceived the insignificance of man in comparison to God. ***It is not in man:*** No greater words could have been uttered concerning the inability of man to determine his own moral standards by which to live. When men are left to themselves in order to establish moral laws, the wicked take advantage of the innocent and weak. They begin to dominate the weak, even to the point of genocide of one class, tribe or ethnic group. It is for this reason that men must have a Divine standard for establishing moral laws. Only our Creator can be this standard. ***Correct me:*** Man must look beyond himself in order to receive direction and correction. Asking for God's discipline and instruction is the plea of the righteous. ***Mercy with justice:*** If man were to be legally accountable for his violations against God's law, no one would stand just before God (Rm 3:9,10,23). Therefore, in order for any man to be saved, there must be mercy from God. Thus grace reaches forth with mercy in order to pardon those who transgress God's law. ***Fury:*** Jeremiah, as David, saw any attack against God's people as an attack against God and His work through His people. He thus cried out an imprecatory prayer that God bring judgment upon the enemies of Israel. This prayer was answered when God terminated those nations who had arrogantly set their hand against the people of God.

Confessions And Prophecy
(11:1 – 20:18)

Outline: (1) The Covenant (11:1 – 12:17), (2) Parables and proclamations (13:1-27), (3) The drought (14:1 – 15:9), (4) Confessions of the prophet (15:10-21), (5) Exhortations (16:1 – 17:18), (6) Call to obedience (17:19 – 20:18)

Chapter 11
THE COVENANT

11:1-17 The historical setting of the following confessions was probably during the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) and the early reign of Jehoiakim (608-597 B.C.). God takes the people back to the covenant that He established with them at Mount Sinai (Dt 27 – 30). In his reforms, Josiah renewed the promise of the people to keep ceremonially the laws of the covenant. However, God reminded them that their obedience to His law had not always been the case for they were a rebellious people. God redeemed Israel out of Egyptian bondage. He took the initiative to free the people from bondage and give them birth into nationhood. He established a covenant with them, exhorting them to hear the words of the covenant and do them. Nevertheless, their fathers failed to be obedient. They walked in the imagination of their own hearts and followed after their stubborn desires. ***Conspiracy:*** God told Jeremiah that there was a conspiracy among the men of Judah. Josiah had implemented outward reforms, but the hearts of the people had not changed. They were rebellious and stubborn as their forefathers, and thus conspiring to turn again to idols. ***I will bring evil upon them:*** The revival of rebellion among the people would be punished. In their punishment, God told Jeremiah that they would not cry out to Him, but to their idol gods, proving that they had a heart of conspiracy. Their idol gods, however, would not save them (2:28; 7:17,18). ***Do not pray:*** The revelation concerning their former disobedience was possibly for the sake of Jeremiah. God wanted him to understand that as in the former times, the people had their hearts set on spiritual treachery. They would not become loyal to Him again. He is told, therefore, that he must not intercede for them through prayer, for God was going to bring deserving judgment upon them. He would not answer any prayers to save them. ***Vows and sacrificial flesh:*** Performance of law cannot take the place of loyalty of the heart. Their performance of the laws of the covenant were futile because they had an adulterous heart of treason. ***Olive tree:*** Israel was at first beautiful as a new olive tree. But she became corrupt and vile. She was no longer good for producing spiritual fruit. It was time, therefore, for her to be plucked up and burned. Israel had violated the conditions of the covenant, and thus God was no longer obligated to carry out His part of the covenant, that is to make Israel prosper and protect her from her enemies.

11:18-23 When the preacher speaks the truth, opposition will come from those who are in bondage to their own self-deceptions. Opposition will also come from those who are in bondage to their traditions that they honor above the truth of God. In this case, there was a plot to kill Jeremiah in Anathoth, Jeremiah's hometown. ***I was like a lamb:*** Jeremiah may have been somewhat naive concerning how serious this opposition became when their traditional religiosity was disturbed by the preaching of the truth. The plot caught him by surprise because it came from his own relatives. ***Vengeance:*** As David, Jeremiah asked that God bring judgment upon those who would harm him. ***I will punish them:*** Anyone who would set his hand against a man of God should read carefully these words. Those who would set themselves against one who is doing the work of God will reap the vengeance of God. Sometimes God's vengeance is carried out in life, but certainly it will be carried in the afterlife. It is a blasphemous act for one to raise his hand against one who is speaking forth the word of God (See 2 Kg 2:22-24).

Chapter 12

12:1-4 Jeremiah's complaint was as Job's. He wondered why the righteous had to suffer in the presence of a good and benevolent God (See comments Jb 10:1-12).

12:5,6 Jeremiah was shaken by the treachery of his relatives and neighbors in Anathoth. He complained to God. He was a young prophet at this time, not realizing that anyone who would stand up for God to speak against a culture of sin would be severely persecuted. But he soon learned that the most vehement people who stand against the preaching of the truth are those of the religious community. ***Footman ... wearied your:*** God countered Jeremiah's complaints. If a soldier was worried about the foot soldiers, then certainly he would be terrified with the charging horses. ***Land of peace:*** If those of his own homeland troubled him, then what would he do when going into a jungle of opposition wherein lions were ready to ravage him? It was into these lions that God was leading Jeremiah. ***Multitude after you:*** God warned Jeremiah that there was worse to come. If his own people rose up against him, then certainly the whole nation would seek his demise. Anyone who would stand up and preach to a generation of people that has wholly forsaken the word of God can expect no less. True men of God are willing to stand alone against the masses who have gone into apostasy. Those who preach amidst the majority who are in apostasy are revolutionaries. They bravely seek to turn people back to God, away from the apostate society in which they live. They thus produce social chaos in producing a paradigm shift away from that which is the norm for religious conduct. The initial leaders who lead in religious paradigm shifts, therefore, are ostracized from the masses as was Jeremiah. They are despised and rejected. They are leaders who never see the fruits of their ministry, for religious paradigm shifts take one or two generations to be fully realized.

12:7-13 ***Heritage:*** Jeremiah's rejection by his relatives and friends of his homeland was an object lesson. Israel was the bride of God. But she betrayed Him by going after the idol gods of the nations. As Jeremiah was compelled to forsake his family, so God was compelled to forsake Israel, for she no longer wanted to be in a covenant relationship with Him. ***A lion:*** Israel was a raging lion that had turned against Her creator. ***Speckled bird:*** When God turned Israel over to the international turmoil that prevailed at the time, she was as a speckled

bird ready to be devoured. ***Vineyard:*** Israel was ready to be trampled down as a prized vineyard that should have brought forth good fruit for her Maker. But she produced worthless fruit. As a vine that produces grapes for wine, she had lived her productive years, and now, needed to be plucked up in order that a new vine be planted. The land was to be turned over to those who did not care for it. Though she was sown to produce wheat, she produced thorns, and thus was worthless for the purpose for which she was planted.

12:14-17 Israel was chosen for a specific purpose in history, which purpose Israel's neighbors did not understand. That purpose was to be the nation through whom God would bring the Messiah and Savior into the world in fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers (Gn 12:1-3). However, when God chose Israel, this did not mean that He turned away from the nations of the world and ignored them. God is the Lord of all those who would seek to do His will. The neighboring nations who worked against Israel would be punished because of their abuse of God's people and refusal to honor the inheritance of Palestine that was given to Israel. But those nations who would turn to God would be blessed. The Bible historian must not forget that God chose Israel in order to preserve a portion of the world society for the revelation of His plan of redemption. The whole world had previously turned to sin before the days of Noah's time (Gn 6:5). Lest this happen again among the populations of the world, God chose a specific people who were led by Abraham, our father of faith. When this nation turned to wickedness, God's plan was to purify the nation through captivity, and then continue His work through them to bring the Savior into the world. ***Destroy that nation:*** The neighboring nations that abused Israel would be destroyed from existence if they did not forsake their idolatry and come to God. God would take back the inherited land of promise from the land grabbers, and give it back to His people whom He would pluck out of the nations to whom they had been driven.

Chapter 13
PARABLES & PROCLAMATIONS

13:1-11 This is the parable of the waistcloth. Since Jeremiah by this time in his ministry was well-known among the people, it is probable that he actually made the 500 kilometer trip to the Euphrates River in order to bury the waistcloth. Other Bible students think he simply went to a small village northeast of Jerusalem. The message of the lesson was that God had clothed himself with Israel. But His people did not seek to be clothed with Him, and thus followed after the imagination of their own heart. They became spiritually marred while being worn by God. When Jeremiah retrieved the buried waistcloth, it was rotten and ruined. So it would be with Israel. Israel was rotten with sin and ruined for God's purpose for which He chose Israel. Judah, the remainder of Israel in the land, was to be cast away as a useless waistcloth. The useless generation of Israel that was taken into captivity would die in captivity. Only their children and grandchildren would return to the land after the initial release of exiles in 586 B.C.

13:12-14 This was the parable of the wine vessel. The occasion may have been one of the festival celebrations where the wine vessels were visible to everyone. Judah had drunk too much sin, and thus was reeling with rebellious drunkenness. Because of the wicked example of the rulers, the people had lost their moral direction. In their moral confusion, they were in conflict with one another. As their sin fermented, they became a society that was turning on itself. In the end, God would smash the wine vessel of Judah.

13:15-19 ***Give glory to God:*** Jeremiah was dedicated to his people, and thus he pleaded with them to turn from their society of sin. Though God knew that they would not turn, Jeremiah's heart moved him to plead that they save themselves from the darkness into which they had cast themselves (See At 3:19). Their only hope was to listen to the voice of God, lest the light of His way be turned into a shadow of death. At the end of his plea, he realized that they would not listen. Their destiny, therefore, was sealed. They would go into captivity. ***The king:*** Jeremiah pleaded with the leadership of the nation. The king at this time was probably Jehoiachin (2 Kg 24:8-12). ***The south:*** Egypt would not come to their aid. Their only recourse, therefore, was to humble themselves before God. If they humbled themselves they would live, though they would still go into captivity. This eventually happened when Jehoiachin and the first group of exiles were taken by Babylonia in the first captivity of 587 B.C. (See 2 Kg 24:14-16).

13:20-27 Jerusalem (Judah) is addressed as a shepherd girl who has lost her flock. The Babylonians would come and set over the flock one of their choice. The people of God had digressed from desiring and appointing God-anointed kings, to choosing their own kings, and now to foreign powers choosing their kings (2 Kg 20:12,13). This would be the final humiliation of Israel as a nation. If the people cried out as to why God would allow such to happen to His people, the answer would be clear. It was because they forsook their God. ***Can the Ethiopian change:*** Once sin becomes the culture, there can be no immediate change without divine intervention. A leopard cannot change who he is or how he appears. Judah could not change from her culture of sin. Their sin had become their culture, and thus they could not change their cultural identity without the help of God. And in this case, God's solution for their sin was bondage. ***I will scatter:*** As the chaff is blown away by the wind at the winnowing floor, so will Judah be scattered. Because of their falsehoods, adulteries and lewdness, they could no longer be God's representative nation among the nations. They had morally become as the nations, and thus gave up their right to represent God among the nations.

Chapter 14
THE DROUGHT

14:1-6 A severe drought became the occasion for Jeremiah to rise up and proclaim the reason for the drought. Jeremiah believed that the drought was an act of God. The drought had ravaged the land. The conditions were so bad that it brought the people to their knees in mourning.

14:7-9 Herein is their definition of their concept of God. They believed that God would behave according to the actions

and desires of man, just as they manipulated their idol gods. The famine had humbled them to desperation. They were a distressed people crying out for deliverance from their plight. They voiced their confessions, but their hearts were still hardened to the ways of the true and living God. With all their complaining, they blamed God for their suffering. And because they blamed Him, they demanded that He relieve them of their suffering. They believed that they could command the behavior of God, while forgetting that they were actually the problem. We are not told if this drought was the direct work of God. If it was, then it was brought on because of their sin in order to move them to repentance. If it was not, then their concept of God was that He could be called on only in times of despair and calamity in order to relieve them of their calamity. Their concept of God was that He was fickle and would respond to the whims of their desires. Such was the behavior of the gods they had conceived in their minds, and thus they assumed the God of heaven would so behave in response to their pleas.

14:10-12 ***They loved to wander:*** Those who have no love of the word of God will wander from one religious group to another, seeking one that will please their own desires (See comments 2 Tm 4:3,4). The Israelites wandered from one idol god to another, seeking those who would condone their ungodly behavior. ***Remember their iniquity:*** God's remembrance of sin means that He punishes sin. Again God called on Jeremiah not to pray for the people that He forget their sin. He reminded Jeremiah that their requests to Him were shallow and insincere. They would pray to the god they thought would deliver them out of their dilemmas. And since they were suffering, their sorrow would exist only until they were delivered from their calamity. Insincere prayer and fasting that is not from one whose life portrays total commitment to God will profit nothing in response from God. God answers the prayers of those who walk in the light of His word (Compare 1 Jn 2:3,4; 3:22).

14:13-16 ***The prophets:*** Jeremiah proclaimed that the false prophets were the problem. They had led the people astray. And true, God did not send these prophets to the people. They were self-proclaimed religious leaders. However, the problem with false prophets is that fickle people are willing to listen to them. They can prophesy lies only when the people give a willing ear. They will accept a lying vision when the people seek those who will speak according to the behavior they want to live (2 Tm 4:3,4). When the people want to be deceived, they will find someone to speak the deceptions they want to hear (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). For this reason, both the prophets and people must share in the responsibility of the calamity that was to come.

14:17-22 ***Tears day and night:*** Jeremiah's grief over the condition of Judah was an expression of what God felt. The drought had taken its toll on the land and the people. People were dying. There was famine and disease. While the false prophets presented themselves to the people with a deceptive holiness, the people were succumbing to the severity of famine. ***Have you utterly rejected Judah:*** Jeremiah's question assumes that he believed that all would die. ***We acknowledge:*** Jeremiah confessed for Judah. But his confession would not turn the nation from idolatry. He confessed their sin in order that they not be annihilated. ***Remember ... covenant:*** It was not that God had forgotten the covenant. Jeremiah's plea that God remember the covenant was a plea to spare some of the people in order that all the people not be annihilated. ***Vanities of the Gentiles:*** There were no gods among the Gentiles who could cause it to rain. Only the God who created water and clouds could bring rain again upon the land. Jeremiah thus relinquished himself to wait until God answered his plea for the rain. If the rains came, then he would know that God still sought to preserve some of Judah in order to continue the covenant that He had established with them at Mount Sinai.

Chapter 15

15:1-4 Jeremiah was sincere about his concern for the people. However, God would not accept his intercession on their behalf. In the days of Moses and Samuel, the people responded to natural calamities with repentance. But at this time in their history, they were beyond repentance, for they could not discern that the natural calamity was sent from God. They had deceived themselves into believing that their behavior was according to the will of God. But it was not according to the will of the one true and living God. It was the will of their gods that they had created after their own desires. These gods allowed them to live according to their own moral standards (See comments Hs 4:6). For this reason, the Judah that existed at this time was consigned to destruction. All this was the result of not being able to recover morally from the sinful leadership of their leaders, especially King Manasseh (2 Kg 21:1-26; 24:3,4).

15:5-9 These verses are a lamentation over the people. Jeremiah laments the fact that no one would take pity on the people. No one would ask concerning the welfare of Jerusalem. God had worked through chastisement in order to encourage repentance. But they would not repent. And thus, God was tired of trying to turn them back. ***Widows:*** So many men would die in the war that would come that there would be a great increase in widows. ***Her sun has gone down:*** Jerusalem could have continued to live as a city, but the wickedness of the inhabitants brought her to a premature death.

CONFESSIONS OF THE PROPHET

15:10-14 This is a personal dialogue between Jeremiah and God. It was a time in Jeremiah's ministry when he was overwhelmed with the burden of his work. The people suffered from the wicked leadership of King Manasseh. There had been a plot against Jeremiah to take his life. The land was suffering from a severe famine. Add to this the fact that Jeremiah was now ostracized from the people because of his message. ***Woe to me:*** The burden of the ministry and the times brought Jeremiah into a state of despondency. As most leaders who lead alone at the front in order to initiate a social and religious paradigm shift to that which is right, he felt that he was failing in his ministry because he could see no immediate results of his labors. ***I will set you free:*** Verse 11 is God's encouragement of Jeremiah, that in desperation, those who were now his enemies would eventually appeal to him

for help. Verse 12 would possibly be Jeremiah's response. In other words, Jeremiah questioned whether he could break the iron of the Babylonians who were coming from the north. In his despondency, he questioned God as to how he could ever keep back the advancement of the Babylonians. Verses 13 & 14 are God's reply to Jeremiah's doubt concerning his feelings of inadequacy in stopping the coming destruction. God assured Jeremiah that He would allow all the land and city to be plundered. Jeremiah would also be taken into a land and to a people whose language he would not understand (43:4-7). In general, God told Jeremiah that in Judah's case, it had to get worse before it could get better.

15:15-18 Jeremiah continued to be in despair, regardless of God's encouragement. He may have possibly felt somewhat sorry for himself because he was alone in his ministry of the word of God to a rebellious people. However, he was not alone, for there were other prophets as Huldah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah who were contemporary with him in his ministry. ***Your words ... I ate:*** He accepted the ministry of being the medium through whom God would communicate a message of doom to the people. God's word brought joy to him, but defiance from the people brought despair. ***I sat alone:*** Those leaders who would stand up to preach the word of God will often find themselves sitting alone. Revolutionaries who seek to initiate a social and religious paradigm shift from apostasy to righteousness will always stand alone. ***Why is my pain perpetual:*** Jeremiah cried out in deep despair, feeling that God would not come to his aid. God replied with a rebuke in reference to his faith. If he would repent of his lack of faith, God promised to restore him to confidence. As a man of God, God did not accept his woeful complaints (See Jb 3; 6; 7). God required of him total commitment to his ministry. If Jeremiah would accept his destiny, then he had to accept all the rejection that would come with it. God knew that Jeremiah was committed to the task. Therefore, He asked Jeremiah to look deep within himself in order to stir up his convictions.

15:19-21 God's reply to the prophet's self-pity were words of chastisement. A confident prophet of God could not wallow in self-pity and despondency. Such only develops into a lack of confidence in one's self and ministry. Stress makes one want to do that which a prophet can never do, that is, run from the people in order to find emotional relief. If Jeremiah would sort himself out, then God would go to work for him. In order to reassure him, God promised that no one would take his life, but that he would die of old age. God's encouragement was not that he would experience great results from his ministry, but that he would live throughout his ministry.

Chapter 16
EXHORTATIONS

16:1-4 God did not want to increase the emotional burden of Jeremiah with the responsibilities of a family. He did not want him to have children who would be born into such a depraved society, and consequently suffer the unbearable calamities that were coming. God knew that the burden of a family in such a distressful time would be too much for the prophet to bear (See comments 1 Co 7:26).

16:5-9 The times of joy were soon to be gone from the land. The calamity would be so great that the dead would not be buried. ***Break bread:*** There would be no more funeral services for the dead, for there would be too many to bury. ***Consolation to drink:*** No one would be left to console the loss of a father or mother. ***In your days:*** Jeremiah was given a time in which all these things would occur. He would see the end of national Israel as an independent nation.

16:10-13 The inability of the people to return to God is explained in this text. ***What is our iniquity:*** The moral standard by which they lived was sinful, though they thought that they were living right before God. The fact was that they were living according to their beliefs in their false gods, which gods were the creation of their own desire to live a wicked life. ***Because your fathers have forsaken Me:*** Their digression into a culture of sin began with their fathers. Thus, the fathers had passed to the children a religious and moral culture that was contrary to the will of God. ***Not kept My law:*** Once they behaved culturally contrary to the will of God, they could not go back, for they had seared their consciences (Hs 4:6; see comments Mk 7:1-9). ***Worse than your fathers:*** Sinful cultures do not get better. They continue to digress further into moral degradation (See Gn 6:5). ***So that you may not hearken:*** They were at the point of no moral return. Their consciences had been seared and their hearts hardened against God (See comments Rm 1:18-21; 1 Tm 4:1,2).

16:14-18 In the midst of a message of calamity, there was a message of hope and rebirth. The joy of the new generation over being set free from the captivity of their enemies would be greater than their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. ***I will send:*** God would fetch His people out of all the lands to which He had sent them after the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria and after the fall of the southern kingdom to Babylonia. A remnant of all twelve tribes would eventually return to the land. But first, God had to discipline them because of their apostasy to idol gods. The generations that would come from the initial captives had to be morally molded for the restoration to come.

16:19-21 The time would come when even the Gentiles would realize the foolishness of idols. They would come to recognize the great God of Israel because of what He would do in bringing His people back into their land from which He had driven them. ***The Lord:*** That is, "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex 3:14).

Chapter 17

17:1-4 ***Iron ... diamond:*** The apostasy of Judah would not be changed. God had worked every calamity against the people, but they would not recognize that the calamities were His work of discipline in order to restore them to the law of the covenant. In view of the general pronouncement of the cause of their apostasy from God, they had become rich, and thus consumed upon their own selves to the neglect of the poor. In fact, their wicked economic practices had created the poor. Once materialism becomes the culture of a society, those who possess the wealth of the economy will do everything to maintain their riches, even to the neglect of others. Leaders will

hang on to power to the hurt of the people. Rich business people will oppress and exploit their laborers. Israel's apostasy was more than a change in religion. It was a change in culture. It was a change from a farming culture where no poor class existed to a rich social culture of the elite who created and oppressed the poor. The only way to correct such a society was to send it into the humiliation of poverty. And that God did to Israel by sending His people into captivity. He kept them in slavery until the materialistic culture had died off, and a new culture of humble servants could be brought forth as in the time when the Israelites came out of Egyptian captivity.

17:5-8 ***Who trusts in man:*** If they thought that they could trust in themselves, or in an alliance with another nation to deliver them from certain calamity, they were mistaken. God had determined their destiny, and no man could change it. ***Trusts in the Lord:*** A tree in a dry area sends its roots far into the ground for water. So it is with those who have a deep faith in the Lord. When times of great turmoil come, the deeply faithful will drink from the riches of God's care for them.

17:9-11 The basic nature of a man cannot be trusted if he has turned his back on God. When men leave the moral standard of God, they become deceitful and treacherous. Judah was incurably sick, and thus could not be healed of the lusts for material things. God is constantly searching the hearts of men. He tests and examines the deepest feelings and emotions of men in order to determine what we love the most. In this case, God found a heart of unrighteous materialism. Thus the riches of the greedy that had been unjustly acquired would soon be taken away.

17:12-18 Jeremiah speaks of hope and praise of God. God's rule from heaven was originally the foundation of the faith of Israel. But it would come to pass that those who had forsaken their faith in God, would be ashamed, for they would be taken into captivity. They would be ashamed because they had given up their hope and trust in God. ***Let them be ashamed:*** The word that Jeremiah spoke was from God, and thus in his defense before his persecutors, he reminded them that the calamity about which he spoke was coming from the Lord. Jeremiah was only the messenger who brought to the people a message of doom from God. Unfortunately, the people had moved so far from God that they could not discern the fact that Jeremiah was speaking a message from God.

CALL TO REPENTANCE

17:19-27 The materialism of the people had carried over into profaning the Sabbath, a day in which they were supposed to cease from work as a sign that they honored the covenant they had with God. Keeping of the Sabbath was to be a signal that the nation was obedient to the law of the covenant. When they forgot the law, then they carried on with their thirst to gain as much as possible through trading with one another and the exploitation of their laborers. The profaning of the Sabbath, therefore, manifested the real problem among the rulers and people. It was not that they were violating a legal code of the law, but that they had rejected God's conditions of the covenant. It was a signal that they had forgotten God and created a religion that would conform to their materialistic culture. If they would repent, then they would keep the laws of the covenant. God would then keep them in the land, and save the city. Unfortunately, neither would happen because they had strayed so far away from God that they could not morally find their way back. And since the people considered Jeremiah to be speaking false ideas, they rejected him and his message of repentance.

Chapter 18

18:1-4 When the clay pot is marred, the potter must start over by reshaping the clay into something different. The point was that Israel had to be remolded and shaped into another nation. The same clay was used, but a different nation would come forth from captivity. All those to whom Jeremiah spoke would die. Only their children and grandchildren would benefit from their repentance. A different generation of Israelites would be restored to the land.

18:5-10 Since God gave birth to the nation of Israel by their deliverance from Egyptian captivity, then He had the right to remake the nation, since the culture of the nation to which Jeremiah prophesied was different than the nation that came out of Egyptian captivity. The nation of Israel was brought forth from Egyptian captivity for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world for the salvation of all men. However, the existing nation to whom Jeremiah spoke forsook the purpose for which it was created. For this reason, the Creator of the nation decided to start again with a morally remolded remnant that would descend from those who were going into captivity. God could do this with Israel because the nation continued to exist only because of God's watchful eye over her. When He looked the other way, the nations of the world were too fierce for her, and thus the nations consumed her in captivity.

18:11,12 ***We will walk after our own devices:*** God gave Israel the freedom to choose concerning their destiny. If they chose obedience, then they would remain in the land. If they chose rebellion, then they would be cast out of the land. If they found themselves living contrary to the law of God, then they could repent, and He would restore them. This happened many times throughout their history. But now, they chose to walk according to the laws that they had created after their own desires. For this reason, destruction of the old Israel was imminent. The Divine Potter was at this time in the process of forming a new pot out of the clay of a marred nation.

18:13-17 ***Who has heard such things:*** It was not natural that a nation forsake its national gods. The gods of a particular nation were symbols of patriotism. Those who would be patriotic to the nation and the king, therefore, honored the gods of the kingdom. But Israel forsook her God, and ran after the patriotic symbols of foreign nations. God chided the people in these verses by pointing out the absurdity of such behavior. ***Astonished and wag his head:*** The foolishness of Israel's turn to the gods of other nations with which she would make any economic treaty caused the nations to deride her for her fickle nature. They viewed such frivolous idolatry as unpatriotic to one's nation.

18:18-23 ***Devices against Jeremiah:*** The religious leaders

devised a plot against Jeremiah. Since he had attacked them for their poor leadership of the people, they retaliated with vengeance (See also 11:21-23). Jeremiah had attacked them because they used their positions and support from the people to lead the people away from God. ***Will evil be rewarded for good:*** The very people for whom Jeremiah had made intercession were now turning against him. This was the last straw for Jeremiah. As David, Jeremiah voiced an imprecatory prayer to God that He bring down judgment on them. Jeremiah finally understood the reprobate nature of the people as God understood them at the beginning of his ministry. ***Pit ... snares:*** Anyone who would take the side of God against false religious leaders would do well to look for pits and snares. Religious leaders who crave their positions because of pomp, power and purse, will often seek the death of those who proclaim the fallacy of their behavior and twisted beliefs (See comments At 19:24-41). The scribes and Pharisees hated Jesus for threatening their positions, possessions and power. And thus, such people will also hate the true servants of God (Jn 7:7; 15:18,19).

Chapter 19

19:1-13 In order to illustrate the destruction that was coming, Jeremiah was instructed to take some of the older people who were more mature in their thinking, and demonstrate before them what was coming. What Jeremiah did before them is stated in verse 10. The message was that Judah and Jerusalem would be shattered by their enemies. They would never be restored to what they were in the day when Jeremiah revealed this message. The destruction in 586 B.C. by the Babylonian army would be the termination of national Israel as they knew it. However, from a remnant of Israel, God would make a new nation. ***Tophet:*** A rubbish heap. The reason they would become a rubbish heap was that they had offered sacrifices to other gods. ***Valley of the Son of Hinnom:*** This valley south of Jerusalem was used by Manasseh as a place to worship false gods (2 Ch 33:6). It was a place where children were sacrificed. When Josiah initiated a restoration in Judah, he turned this place into a rubbish heap and changed the name to Tophet (2 Kg 23:10). ***Make void the counsel:*** All the schemes of Judah to deliver themselves would accomplish nothing. ***Food for the birds:*** There will be so many dead that there would be no place to bury them. The Babylonians would take their captives and leave the dead bodies lying on the ground for the birds and animals to eat. ***Eat the flesh of their sons:*** Hunger would be so great in the city that during the time of the siege parents would eat their children in order to survive. The people would become crazed because of the trauma of the siege.

19:14,15 Jeremiah repeated at the temple the message of verses 3-9. The bravery of Jeremiah in these times was strong. He had grown from the timid young prophet to one who could stand alone in the religious center of an apostate nation and proclaim its destruction (At 14:19). His words caused such a stir on this occasion that Pashur beat him and put him in stocks.

Chapter 20

20:1-6 The reaction of Pashur indicates that many in the crowd were listening to what Jeremiah was saying. ***Stocks:*** In order to discredit Jeremiah, he was put on public display for the jeers of those who rejected his message. Because he stood against the message and positions of the religious leaders, he now for the first time suffered direct persecution from their hands. Nevertheless, by this time in his ministry Jeremiah had grown strong in character and the power of his message. ***Magor-missabib:*** That is, "terror on every side." ***You have prophesied lies:*** Pashur was evidently leading in contradicting Jeremiah's message by saying that there would be peace, not calamity in the future of Judah (8:11). Jeremiah declared the reward for such lies. He prophesied that Pashur and his family would go into captivity. Pashur had to witness personally the calamity that would come upon the people. All his friends, however, would die in disgrace. ***Riches ... treasures:*** The materialistic greed of Judah had led her into apostasy. Through the Babylonian conquest, therefore, God would take away all the treasures in which she trusted. ***And there you will die:*** The generation of initial captives died in captivity. Because of their wicked leadership, all leaders of the initial captives died before the expiration of the seventy years of captivity. Only the children and grandchildren participated in the first return from captivity that took place 536 B.C.

20:7-10 In this bitter complaint to God, it is noted that Jeremiah did not turn from his destiny as a spokesman for God. He tried not to speak, but he could not contain that which was in him. He was thus truly speaking the word of God from his heart. His conviction drove him to warn the people. His knowledge of what was in the future compelled him to speak out. He did not doubt the message. On this occasion, he simply revealed the tremendous burden to preach the message of God to a people who were rebellious against what God wanted them to do. He was firm in that he told the people what they needed to know, but did not want to know and do. He would lead them where they should go, but did not want to go. Great leaders for God proclaim God's word and lead the people in this manner.

20:11-13 ***Therefore, my persecutors will stumble:*** Anyone who would rise up against one of God's men can expect calamity in his own life. The enemies of the preacher will not prevail simply because of the message of truth that the preacher speaks. The word will endure forever (Mt 24:35; 1 Pt 1:25). One may kill God's representative, but he can never kill the truth. It was the imprecatory request of Jeremiah that those evildoers who persecuted him be punished by God. Jeremiah was not the instrument of God's punishment of the evildoers. Jeremiah knew that it was God who would carry out vengeance.

20:14-18 Jeremiah wanted no birthday celebrations because of the misery of his work. He happened to be born in an era when God's people had totally forsaken Him. God thus needed a man as Jeremiah who would take a message of doom and destruction to a people He was casting off. Jeremiah's time of birth, therefore, would have been unfortunate for any

true prophet of God. Nevertheless, in order for God's justice to stand, His people had to be warned. When they eventually went into destruction, and some into captivity, they could never say that they had not been warned. Jeremiah's ministry, therefore, was to defend the justice of God before a reprobate generation of rebellious apostates.

Prophecy Of The End
(21:1 – 29:32)

Outline: (1) Beginning of the end (21:1-10), (2) Judgment against the royal family (21:11 – 23:8), (3) Judgment against false prophets (23:9-40), (4) Parable of the figs (24:1-10), (5) Preview of the end (25:1-38), (6) Opposition (26:1 – 29:32)

Chapter 21

BEGINNING OF THE END

This context takes us to the end of Judah and Jerusalem that occurred in 586 B.C. It was then that the Babylonians laid siege to the city and destroyed it (See 37:3 – 38:28), taking into captivity the remainder of the Israelites.

21:1,2 ***Zedekiah:*** He was the last king of Israel before the captivity. ***Inquire:*** In view of the idolatry into which the nation had fallen by this time, and Pashur's persecution of Jeremiah, we would assume that Zedekiah's plea to the Lord was the last resort after he had consulted all his false gods. The plea, therefore, would reveal a belittlement of the God of heaven in the mind of Zedekiah. He belittled God by considering Him to be the last "god" to which he would plea for the deliverance of the nation. We cannot believe that he had now become a monotheist and true believer in the God of heaven. We would also suppose that this was a humiliating command in reference to what Pashur was to do. He now was commanded by the king to request prayer from Jeremiah whom he had formerly beaten and publicly mocked (20:1,2).

21:3-7 Destruction and death were certain. The historical calamity that would befall Jerusalem, and was unchangeably written with a stylus of iron, had now come to fulfillment. No request would turn the course of history. They had waited too long to repent.

21:8-10 God set two options before the people. They could surrender and give themselves over to the Babylonians. Or, they could stay in the city and fight. If one gave himself over to the Babylonians, a person's booty from the battle would be his own life. Those who remained in the city would die from the natural catastrophes and war that came with a city under siege. Those who would surrender would thus begin the hard road to cultural rehabilitation. It would start with total submission to the enemy. In their humiliation, their arrogance, that brought them to this point in history, would be crushed. Their children would thus be born to parents who had suffered the humiliation of captivity. In growing up in captivity, the children, therefore, would begin the spiritual road back to submission to God. On the other side of the captivity, a new generation would come forth in service to God (See comments Er & Ne).

JUDGMENT AGAINST THE ROYAL FAMILY

21:11-14 This exhortation is a general message to the kings of Judah. Those material things that were acquired by the exploitation of the oppressed, and which the rich oppressors cherished so much, would be taken from them by their captors. The corrupt rulers would lose all they had taken from the people through corruption. ***Inhabitant:*** Since the Hebrew word here is feminine, reference is probably to the city of Jerusalem. However, in view of the context, reference could be to the royal family that lived in Jerusalem. ***Who will come down against us:*** Whether Jerusalem, or the royal family, self-sufficient arrogance was their character. God would come down to them in judgment. ***According to the fruit of your deeds:*** When people deal harshly with others, with the same harshness God will deal with them. We will be judged according to our deeds (2 Co 5:10).

Chapter 22

22:1-5 The morals of the leadership of a nation determine the direction in which the nation is headed. ***The exploited:*** In a corrupt nation, there is no one to take the defense of the poor, widows, orphans and foreigners. If the king will not come to their defense, then the nation is morally doomed.

22:6-9 The rulers of Judah remained corrupt, and thus reaped the punishment of the Lord. The royal family was taken from the Jewish society and would never rise again on earth. ***They forsook the covenant:*** Though the nations remained patriotic to their national gods, Israel forsook her God. Though the nations did not have a correct view of the covenant between God and Israel, they at least knew that a nation should never forsake her national god. They thus mocked Israel because she broke the covenant between herself and her God by violating the conditions of their covenant with their God.

22:10-12 ***Never return again:*** Those who were taken into captivity would die in captivity. ***Do not weep:*** Jeremiah told the people not to weep for Josiah, but for Shallum who would be taken into captivity by the Egyptians. ***Shallum:*** Or, Jehoahaz. His father, Josiah, was killed by Pharaoh-necho at Megiddo. The people then made Shallum their king in Jerusalem. However, after three months Pharaoh-necho took Shallum as a captive into Egypt (2 Kg 23:30-34). Pharaoh-necho then placed Eliakim (Jehoiakim), another son of Josiah, on the throne.

22:13-17 Jehoiakim was a ruthless and oppressive king. He brought misery upon the people. He followed after his own corrupt heart, exploiting the people for his own gain. He was in power for himself, not to serve the needs of the people. He was so corrupt that he placed his own people in bondage by having them work without pay. He stole the goods of the people, confiscating at will all that pleased his greed. He was a murderous king (26:23). ***Your father:*** Jeremiah contrasted Jehoiakim's life and reign to the life and reign of his father Josiah. Josiah sought to restore Judah to God. Jehoiakim sought to lead God's people away from God. The father failed to pass on to his son a moral ethic, for the son gave himself over to rebellion against all for which his father stood.

22:18,19 Jehoiakim would come to a disgraceful end. Because he grievously oppressed the people with his corrupt behavior, no one would lament his death. He would be disposed as a dead donkey, laid in the sun to rot.

22:20-23 Jeremiah commanded them to go to the north, east and west to those nations on which Judah relied. They would find that these nations were all gone. ***Spoke to you in your prosperity:*** When they were rich and economically doing well, they had no urge to depend on God. In their self-reliance, they refused to listen to God. However, their idol god of prosperity brought them into poverty and captivity. ***Inhabitant of Lebanon:*** The name "Lebanon" was sometimes used in prophecy to refer to Jerusalem. Because the temple and palace were constructed from the cedars of Lebanon, the figure of speech referred to the residents, specifically, the king, as dwelling in houses that were built from the cedars of Lebanon.

22:24-30 ***Coniah:*** That is, Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah (28:4). This oracle of Jeremiah speaks of Jehoiachin before he was taken into captivity, and then of his time in captivity. He was a corrupt and unrighteous king as his father, Jehoiakim. Fortunately, his reign was only three months before Nebuchadnezzar took him and the first group of captives into captivity in 597 B.C. He and his mother, Nehushta, with his wives, were taken with 10,000 Israelites into Babylonian captivity. Though he was taken into captivity, the Israelites still considered him their king of choice. Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, another son of Josiah and uncle to Jehoiachin, on the throne after Jehoiachin was taken into captivity (28:1-4; Ez 17:22). ***Write this man childless:*** Though the people may have envisioned Jehoiachin and his descendants continuing the Davidic lineage of kings, Jeremiah pronounced a termination for his heritage as kings in Jerusalem. As national Israel came to an end, never again to enjoy the pride of nationhood, the demise of the nation was symbolized by the termination of the Davidic kingship on earth through the descendants of David. Earthly kings did Israel no favor in keeping the nation close to God. Earthly kings were fallible, and thus, their leadership behavior in many ways led the people away from God. Now that the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel had gone or were going into captivity, God sought a restoration of God's sole kingship over the repentant remnant, and eventually with the new spiritual Israel that would be ruled directly from heaven through King Jesus (See Ep 1:20-23; Ph 2:5-11; 1 Tm 6:15). The earthly kings led Israel into destruction. King Jesus would reign from heaven and lead the spiritual Israel into victory (See Mt 28:18).

Chapter 23

JUDGMENT AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS

23:1-4 ***Shepherds:*** In view of the subject of the preceding chapter, reference here is probably to the kings of Israel who led the people astray from God to embrace idolatry. Beginning with Solomon, the kings led the people to the idol gods of the nations around them. In most cases, the reason for this was to establish alliances for trade and economic gain. However, the elders of Israel did not turn the people away from the evil influences of their kings, and thus they had to shoulder a great deal of the blame for the apostasy. ***I will gather the remnant:*** God would gather His flock from all the nations to which they were scattered in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. He would bring the flock to Him, and no more allow Israel to have kings on earth. The sin of the kings and leadership of Israel resulted in the flock being scattered. God would thus never allow this to happen again in Israel. By the time of Jesus the Romans had appointed Herod as a king over Israel. But he was not a king who was recognized or sanctioned by God. He was a vassal of the Roman Empire who was initially appointed procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar in 47 B.C. God would remain Israel's only king, ruling from heaven. God the Father would reign until He handed all authority over to His Son (Mt 28:18; see comments Dn 7:13,14). Those who would feed His flock on earth would be directed by the authority of the word of Jesus who is now reigning over all things from heaven (Jn 12:48). As God reigned on earth through the authority of His law that He had given to Israel, so Jesus now reigns on earth through the authority of His word.

23:5,6 Jeremiah prophesied that the righteous Branch would reign and prosper. He would execute righteousness and justice on the earth (23:5; see 33:15). In conjunction with this prophecy, Zechariah prophesied of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in reference to the coming of their King. The King would come to them riding on a donkey (Zc 9:9; see Ps 2:6; 72:1-4). Hosea was more specific. He related these events to the time of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy of Joel 2:28 when he said that the children of Israel would return and seek David their king (Hs 3:5). The time when Israel would seek their king again would be in the last days of national Israel. Jeremiah prophesied of a King that would reign. Zechariah reaffirmed the reign of this King (Zc 9:9). Jesus is the blessed *"King who comes in the name of the Lord"* (Lk 19:38). Matthew applies the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 to the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem (See Mt 21:5-9). Jesus is the "King of kings" (1 Tm 6:15). It was for this destiny that Jesus said He was born (Jn 18:37). Jesus is the King that was prophesied to come and reign on the throne of David. All Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus' kingship on the throne have been fulfilled. Jesus is the righteous Branch who is now reigning on the throne of David in heaven (See Lk 24:44). ***On the earth:*** The Branch would come to the earth, but He would assume His kingship only when He ascended from the earth (See comments Dn 7:13,14). The Branch would not reign on this earth. He would reign from heaven through the power of His word that would be preached on earth (Jn 12:48).

23:7,8 In speaking of the restoration of the remnant to the land, Jeremiah reveals that the event of the restoration will be known as the beginning of the new Israel. They will speak of it more than their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. ***From all the countries:*** A remnant of all twelve tribes would be restored to the promised land. God never intended that all Israelites be restored to the land. He sought only a faithful remnant who would carry on with the national identity of Israel in order that it be known that the promises to the fathers were fulfilled when the Messiah came into the world (See Gn 12:1-3; compare Gl 4:4).

23:9-15 ***Full of adulterers:*** Reference is probably to spiritual adulterers. These were those who had given themselves over to idols. ***In My house:*** They even brought the idols into the temple in Jerusalem. Thus the false prophets in Jerusalem were forcing the people to conform to their folly in reference to the idols. When the people came from the rural areas for the festivals, they were brought into the presence of the idol gods in the temple area. ***Folly in the prophets:*** These full-time religious leaders preached, as Balaam, for gain. In order that they maintain their positions, they preached that which the idolatrous people wanted to hear. They thus led the people to commit spiritual adultery with false gods. They spoke lies to the people in order to maintain the favor of the people. They did not speak against greedy people who exploited the poor. The people became the culture of Sodom and Gomorrah, and thus were deserving of judgment. ***Horrible thing:*** This was probably sodomy (See comments Rm 1:18-32). ***Profaneness gone forth:*** Both in their behavior and in their preaching, the false prophets led the people into that which was an abomination to the Lord.

23:16-22 Jeremiah condemns the false prophets for speaking what they wanted instead of the word of God. The source of their message was from their own thinking, and thus their motives for what they spoke were contrary to the word of God. They were also speaking what the people wanted to hear in order that they maintain their positions as prophets. They were not walking in the counsel of the Lord. They were hypocrites. As a prophet, they had presumed to be speaking for God. However, they had received no commission or commandment from God to speak on His behalf. The fact that they were speaking lies was evidence that they were not speaking for the Lord.

23:23-32 The deists are wrong. God is near, for in Him we live and have our being (At 17:28). He is omnipresent. ***I have dreamed:*** A preacher should be careful about allowing his dreams to determine his message. Too many preachers today seek a following by presumptuously supposing that their dreams are a revelation from God. ***Deceit of their own heart:*** Those who do not know the Bible have only one source from which to speak. They must speak from what they or other men say. Thus imaginations run wild among those who have never come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tm 3:6,7). ***Forgotten My name:*** See comments Mk 7:1-9. ***Speak My word faithfully:*** The man of God should speak those words that are written by the inspired hands of Bible writers (1 Pt 4:11). He should trust in the word of God, not in his dreams. The chaff had nothing to do with the wheat after the harvest, and thus the dreams needed to be blown away. ***Like a fire:*** The word of God will consume the lies of men (Hb 4:12). ***Like a hammer:*** The word of God will smash to pieces the false dreams of those who are led about by their own fantasies. ***Steal My words:*** Those who claim that "God spoke to them" are actually counterfeiting the word of God. They claim to speak a word from God when actually they are relying on the imagination of their own minds. These are false prophets who fashion themselves after a pretense of religiosity in order to gain a following of people (See comments 2 Co 11:12-15).

23:33-40 The oracle of the Lord was an earnest message from God that was laid on the conscience of His prophets. It was something that one should not take lightly, though the false prophets rejected it. The false prophets spoke flippantly about receiving an oracle from God through their dreams, or, as they said, "God says." This stern message of Jeremiah thoroughly rebukes such pretense of religiosity and presumptuously speaking for the Lord. What happened during Jeremiah's day was that the term "oracle" was so misused by false prophets, that God told Jeremiah that he should use it no more. Instead of saying, "the oracle of God," Jeremiah was to say, *"What has the Lord spoken?"* This was a case where a term that was good was eventually used with a wrong definition because it had been misused by the false prophets.

Chapter 24
PARABLE OF THE FIGS

24:1-10 ***Carried away captive Jeconiah:*** The first of three Babylonian captivities took place in 597 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar carried away Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) and 10,000 Israelites (2 Kg 24:8-16). After this event, God revealed to Jeremiah the parable of the figs. (See also Jeremiah's message to the captives in chapter 29). ***Good figs:*** These were the exiles who were already in captivity. ***Bad figs:*** These were those who still remained in Jerusalem. There was a difference in the hearts of the two groups. The good figs would repent and return to the Lord. The bad figs, however, would continue to walk after the desires of their own hearts. Those who were in captivity would eventually understand that God can be found wherever a believer is located. God is not a God who is confined to a particular land, nor is He bound to the ceremonies of any particular religious order, or temple. He is the omnipresent God who lives in the hearts of the obedient (29:10,13; Lk 17:20,21). On the other hand, the bad figs of Jerusalem were trusting that God would not allow either Jerusalem or the temple to be destroyed. These figs would be scattered. Simply because they had escaped the first captivity did not mean that they would escape future raids on Judah by the Babylonians. ***For their good:*** The good that would come from the trial of their captivity would be their repentance. And in repenting, they would give birth to a repentant generation who would in the future restore the existence of Israel for the coming of the Messiah.

Chapter 25
PREVIEW OF THE END

In this chapter the reader is taken back to the 4th year of Jehoiakim that was around 588 B.C. There was great international turmoil occurring that resulted from the recent battle of Carchemish in 606 B.C. It was during this battle that the remnants of the Assyrian army, in a coalition with the Egyptians, were finally defeated by Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonians pursued Pharaoh-necho to the southern boundary of Palestine. He then turned his sights on Judah and Jerusalem. Subsequently, Judah became a vassal of the Babylonian Empire (See 2 Kg 24:1; Is 39:5-7; Dn 1:1). It was during this time that some initial Israelite captives were taken into Babylonian

captivity with Jehoiachin. During these years of turmoil, Jeremiah ministered the prophetic word of God to the remaining Israelites in Judah, confronting them with the inevitable downfall of the southern kingdom if they did not repent.

25:1-7 ***All the people of Judah:*** By this time, Jeremiah had worked as a spokesman for God for 23 years. Not only had Jeremiah cried out to the people that they repent, God had been persistent throughout Judah's history to call the people continually back to His word. ***Turn now everyone from his evil way:*** If the people of Israel had not been so rebellious, we would have no writings of the prophets, for the prophets were sent to call the people to repentance. However, because they would not listen to God, they stirred His anger. As a result, He unleashed calamity upon them in order to encourage their repentance.

25:8-11 ***My servant:*** God first used the Assyrians to discipline the northern kingdom. He then used the Babylonians under the kingship of Nebuchadnezzar to discipline Judah. God disciplined His people through the proxy of these nations in order to restore their loyalty to Him. But they would not listen. The northern kingdom of Israel thus went into captivity in 722/21 B.C. Now it was time for the southern kingdom to go into captivity. ***I will take from them:*** God would take their nationhood from them, and thus they would cease being an independent nation throughout the remainder of their existence. After the Medo-Persians defeated the Babylonians and freed the Jews, the Jews were still under the control of the Medo-Persians, though they returned to Palestine. At the time, Palestine was under the occupation of the Medo-Persians. When the Greeks repelled the Medo-Persian Empire, Palestine was under the control of the Greeks. When the Romans eventually became the world power of the Near East, the Jews were under the control of the Roman Empire. When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C., therefore, it was the end of Israel as a nation who determined her own destiny. ***Seventy years:*** This would be seventy years that was marked by the dominance of the Babylonians, which ended when the Medo-Persians conquered the Babylonians in 539 B.C. We must keep in mind that this number represents the time that the Israelites were under the control of the Babylonians, whether the Israelites were in Palestine or in captivity. When Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Assyrians and Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish in 606 B.C., the control of Palestine fell under the Babylonians. At this time the Babylonians took Jehoiachin and 10,000 Israelites into exile. The Medo-Persians conquered the Babylonians in 539 B.C., and subsequently in 536 B.C. allowed the first Jewish exiles to return to their homeland. This was a period of seventy years from the time of Babylon's initial control of Palestine to the first return of exiles in 536 B.C. However, some Bible students interpret the seventy years as figurative, symbolically referring to the complete time they were to be in captivity until they were morally prepared to return with their total faith in God.

25:12-14 Though God used the Babylonians to discipline His people, He would turn on them because of their arrogance and mistreatment of His people. He would render to them that which they had rendered to His people.

25:15-26 ***The wine cup of this fury:*** God was not only the God of Israel, but of all the nations. Though we are not told all the details concerning how God punished the nations that are listed here, we know that He worked in the affairs of the world in order to bring down judgment on them because of their maltreatment of His people. ***Ruin ... horror ... derision ... curse:*** Judah and Jerusalem had suffered all these calamities. It was now time for judgment to be meted out on all surrounding nations, lest the nations arrogantly assume that the God of Israel was impotent. If only Israel was punished for her sins, then the surrounding nations would have assumed that the Israelites' God was only a regional god, and thus not omnipresent among the nations. But because Jeremiah made the prophecy concerning the calamity of the nations, then the nations would conclude that they too suffered as the God of Israel had prophesied they would. ***Arabia:*** Or, Kedar (49:28-33).

25:27-29 ***You will certainly drink:*** Regardless of whether the nations accepted the fact that God declared that they would suffer punishment, He would still bring judgment upon them. God's work cannot be changed by the rejection of man. Once God has made a prophecy concerning the destiny of a nation, its fulfillment cannot be changed.

25:30-38 The preceding picture of judgment of the nations is now expanded. God is a lion who goes forth in His fierceness in order to bring judgment on the nations. The Lord had a controversy with the nations in reference to their sin against His people. We must not assume that the Lord was going forth with punishment simply to bring down judgment on the nations. The reason for the judgment was because of their maltreatment of His people. He was bringing national Israel as an independent nation to a close. But the nations, who continually harassed His people, would not go unpunished for their arrogant maltreatment of His people. They too would be brought to an end. ***Plundered their pasture:*** The rulers and lords of the nations would wail because their source of help would be cut off. The judgment would go out against all the nations, and thus one nation could not help another. There would be no place to escape the judgment of God.

Chapter 26
OPPOSITION

26:1-6 The date for this prophecy was 604 B.C., just two years after the Babylonians defeated a coalition of forces between the Assyrians and Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish. Amidst the fall of the Assyrian Empire, and the defeat of Pharaoh-necho of Egypt, the Fertile Crescent world was in turmoil. These were times of international change. Judah was still mourning the death of Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh-necho. The people had placed Jehoahaz (Shallum) on the throne, but Pharaoh-necho removed him and placed Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah. Jehoiakim was a ruthless and wicked ruler. As a result, Judah plunged deeper into apostasy since the reforms of Josiah were not from the heart of the people. ***Stand in the court:*** This was God's last appeal to Judah, and thus He commanded Jeremiah to go to the heart of Judah's wayward religiosity, the temple in Jerusalem. The occasion for the deliverance of this message was during one of the Jew-

ish festivals when those of all Judah came to Jerusalem. The message was direct and plain (See 7:1-14). If they did not repent, the temple would be destroyed as the Philistines destroyed Shiloh.

26:7-11 ***Priest ... prophets:*** This was the religious clergy that was financially sustained by the people. When Jeremiah said that their source of income would be destroyed, they schemed, as did the Pharisees and priests during the ministry of Jesus, as to how they would murder Jeremiah. This was the plan of the religious leaders, not the government leaders. The irony of this is that all the true prophets of God had been saying the same thing throughout the latter time of the northern kingdom, and now the end of Judah. Jeremiah's message, therefore, was a contradiction to what the false prophets were saying, that is, "Peace, Peace." It was also an attack against the professionalism of the priests and false prophets. His message of doom manifested their failure to keep the people close to the word of God.

26:12-19 ***The Lord sent me:*** In contrast to the false prophets who sent themselves, Jeremiah immediately proclaimed that what he said was not his opinion, but the message of the Lord. They could kill him, but this would not change the fulfillment of the proclamation that he had made against the city and temple. ***Micah:*** Some of the rural religious leaders evidently stepped forward to remind the people that what Jeremiah spoke was the same message as the prophet Micah (See Mc 3:12). When Micah spoke against the city, Hezekiah and the people did not put him to death. The end of the debate resulted in the rural religious leaders convincing the politically minded religious leaders in Jerusalem that it would be a great evil to put Jeremiah to death.

26:20-24 ***Urijah:*** The mention of Urijah indicates that there were many other prophets of God working in Israel who are not mentioned in the Bible. They ministered the word of God to Israel as Jeremiah, but they did not have their messages recorded by the inspiration of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired selected prophets to write in order that we might have their writings as resources from which to learn (Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). In the case of the murder of Urijah, we are given this historical information in order to be reminded that the prophets of God risked their lives to preach the message of God. Some were killed, and thus their deaths give evidence to the fact that they believed the word of God that they spoke (See comments Hb 11:32-40).

Chapter 27

27:1-11 The Septuagint omits verse 1. The consensus of most textual scholars is that the reading should mention Zedekiah, not Jehoiakim, as is stated by the KJV. Verses 2,12 & 20 clarify the fact that Zedekiah is the king to whom reference is made. The events of this chapter happened in the beginning years of the reign of Zedekiah, specifically in the fourth year (28:1). ***Edom ... Moab ... Ammonites ... Tyre ... Sidon:*** The nations were seeking an alliance with Zedekiah in order to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. ***Bonds and yokes:*** This was an illustrated prophecy. The message was that these nations should submit to Babylon, and thus accept their fate of being vassals to the Babylonian Empire. The reason for this is that in the future the Medo-Persian Empire would take over all the territory of the Babylonian Empire. When the captives would be allowed by the Medo-Persians to return to their homelands, there would be peace in the homelands. Jeremiah's message was that God was the creator of all things, and thus controlled all things. He was in control of the activities of the kingdoms of the world on behalf of His people. At this time in history He had given control of the nations of the Near East into the hands of the Babylonian Empire. Anyone who would proclaim a different message than this, or work against His plan, should be considered a false prophet, and thus was lying to the people. Those who would not accept their subservient role in relation to Babylonian control would be punished and removed from their land. Through their captivity, they would cease as nations. But those who accepted the yoke of Babylonian control would continue to exist in their land. ***Many nations and great kings:*** The time would come when the Babylonians themselves would be placed under the yoke of another nation. This would take place in 539 B.C. when the Medo-Persians would take over the Babylonian Empire.

27:12-15 Jeremiah specifically turned to Zedekiah in order to rebuke him for his thoughts of rebellion against the Babylonians. Zedekiah was not a sensible leader, and thus listened to the proclamations of the false prophets who sought to turn his ear toward revolt. Zedekiah was under the pressure of the visiting kings and the false prophets who were in Jerusalem. God knew that he needed a prophecy that would save him. He thus said to him that if he did not submit, he would die. It was God's will that he submit to Nebuchadnezzar, for God was working through this king of Babylon.

27:16-22 This message was directed to the professional prophets. Some of the vessels of the temple had been taken into Babylon in the 597 B.C. subjugation of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The professional religious leaders were saying that these vessels would soon be brought back to Jerusalem and restored to the temple. The fact was that God would allow the remainder of the temple vessels to be taken to Babylon, which they were in 586 B.C. when the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed (2 Kg 24:8-16). Once the people had completed their years of captivity, and when the exiles returned to rebuild the city and the temple, they would bring with them the vessels of the temple (See comments Er & Ne). But this would happen only after the seventy years of captivity were completed.

Chapter 28

28:1-4 Hananiah represented all the professional prophets who spoke lies to the people, arrogantly claiming to be speaking the word of God. He was brazen in his pronouncements, claiming them to be a prophecy of the future. The events of chapters 27 & 28 took place in the same year of the reign of Zedekiah. The result of Jeremiah walking the streets of Jerusalem with a yoke on his neck had its effect. Evidently, the people began to believe Jeremiah, for all reports concerning the international turmoil that was prevalent at the time seemed to indicate that Jeremiah was correct. The controversy be-

came so strong, that Hananiah was moved to make this false prophecy concerning the future.

28:5-9 ***Amen! May the Lord do so:*** As Hananiah's prophecy was public, so Jeremiah publicly proclaimed that he wished that his prophecy were true. ***Nevertheless:*** Jeremiah used the prophecy of Hananiah as an opportunity for a contest between the prophecies of false prophets and those prophecies that actually came from God. ***The prophet:*** If a preacher is so presumptuous as to claim to know the future, then he must suffer the consequences of his presumptuous proclamations. Verse 9 is the test of the true prophet. If one claims to have spoken concerning the future, and the thing comes to pass, then he can claim to be a prophet of God. However, there is a difference between prediction and prophecy. Prediction is forecasting the future with indications that exist in the present. We predict the future by reading the events of the present that indicate what will probably happen. Thus in prediction there are hints as to what will be. But in true prophecy there are no present indications of what will be. In order for prophecy to be truly believed as prophecy, there must not be any present hints of what will be. There must, however, be enough detail in the prophecy for the beholders to determine when the prophecy is fulfilled. And thus, true prophecy is not vague or unclear concerning the details that must be fulfilled in order for the beholders to understand that the prophecy was real.

28:10,11 ***Jeremiah went his way:*** After Hananiah removed and broke the yoke, there was no need for a public confrontation in words. Jeremiah simply went away in order to wait for God to answer his prophecy concerning the coming calamity. Once God fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy, then people could look back to the words of Jeremiah and learn from them. They could then come to the conclusion that the prophets in which they had trusted were indeed false. The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies was the final evidence that the words of Jeremiah be read and believed for centuries by those who have faith in God.

28:12-17 ***You make this people trust a lie:*** The majority of the people seemed eager to trust the lies of those who claimed to be prophets of God, but were not. People are gullible, and thus in times of stress they seek prophets who will prophecy messages of peace and safety. But in the historical situation in which Judah was at this time, there would be no peace and safety. National Israel had to come to a close in order to give birth to a faithful remnant in seventy years. What is important to remember here is that Jeremiah made Hananiah take responsibility for the lies that he spoke. Jeremiah did not blame the people, though they would suffer the consequences of their belief in the lies. But the final responsibility for the lies must be carried by the one who spoke them. ***A lie:*** The lie also involved preaching that the people could live a morally degraded life, and yet continue without punishment. Hananiah condoned the behavior of the people, and thus prophesied peace and safety, making the people believe that they could live in moral degradation and idolatry, and yet go without punishment. Preachers who do not speak straightforward the word of God are lying to the people. They are making the people think that all is well, when actually they may be on a road to doom. ***Hananiah the prophet died:*** Before the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the end of Judah and Jerusalem, God knew that Jeremiah needed the fulfillment of an immediate prophecy in order to shock the people into listening to him. This prophecy was of the death of Hananiah.

Chapter 29

29:1-9 This is the first of two letters in this chapter. It seems that the false prophets were still working, even among the captives in Babylon. This letter was sent to Babylon, therefore, to encourage the exiles to accept their predicament. Many of them would not return, for they would die by the time of the return in 536 B.C. when the Medo-Persians would take over the Babylonian Empire and release the captives. Therefore, it was imperative that they procreate in captivity in order to give birth to the remnant of Jews who would eventually return to the land of Palestine. It was the responsibility of the parents, therefore, to bring up a faithful generation of sons and daughters who would eventually be the seed generation who would give birth to a new generation of Jews in Palestine. ***The letter:*** There were emissaries going to Babylon on behalf of Zedekiah, and thus Jeremiah sent this written exhortation from God. In the letter, Jeremiah encouraged them to settle in and make peace with their captors. He exhorted them not to be deceived by those among them who were speaking things the Lord did not command. ***Jeconiah:*** Or, Jehoiachin.

29:10-14 ***Seventy years:*** This period of time in captivity means that those to whom Jeremiah wrote this letter would not be alive when the seventy years were completed. Only their children would realize the promise of restoration to the land, and thus they must settle in and start procreation for the continuation of Israel (See comments Er & Ne). The confusing thing at this time was that Jerusalem and the temple were still standing. But this would soon change, for Nebuchadnezzar would eventually destroy the temple in 586 B.C. It seems that the false prophets in Babylon among the initial captives who were taken in 597 B.C. had some effect on the people. They were giving the people a false hope that they would be returning in the near future. For this reason, they were having trouble with settling down and being content as captives among the Babylonians. Therefore, the message of Jeremiah was to remind them that where they were was the will of God. They must accept the fact and carry on with life.

29:15-19 ***Prophets in Babylon:*** Reference would be to Ezekiel and Daniel. ***Make them like vile figs:*** The exiles needed to remember that they were in a better situation than those who remained in Jerusalem. God would make the remainder of the Jews in Jerusalem like vile figs that are distasteful and cast away (See 24:1-10). Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. Thousands of Jews would be killed in the destruction. The Davidic kings on earth would be terminated. No more was a Davidic king to reign in Jerusalem on this earth (22:30).

29:20-23 ***Ahab ... Zedekiah:*** These two were immoral liars. Not only did they preach that which was contrary to the word of the Lord, they also committed adultery with their neighbors' wives. Thus God would use their deaths as an

illustration of God's judgment against all those who would speak and live contrary to the word of God.

29:24-32 A former letter of Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon had contradicted the preaching of Shemaiah. Shemaiah then wrote an angry letter to Zephaniah, a priest in Jerusalem. Shemaiah wanted Jeremiah thrown in prison. He accused Jeremiah of being demented, one who had presumptuously made himself a prophet of God. Those prophets who called themselves into the ministry, as Shemaiah, assumed that every other prophet had also presumptuously assumed the ministry and position of a prophet. Religious men who seek positions and support from the people will often give themselves titles by which they can exalt themselves over the people. ***I will punish Shemaiah:*** The pronouncement of judgment that was laid on Shemaiah for his slander was that he would have no descendant who would enjoy the happiness and freedom that God would eventually bring to His people when they were allowed to return to their homeland.

Consolation And Counsel
(30:1 – 36:32)

Outline: (1) From tragedy to triumph (30:1 – 31:1), (2) Restoration (31:2 – 33:26), (3) Broken promises (34:1-22), (4) The Rechabites (35:1-19), (5) The scroll (36:1-32)

Chapter 30
FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

30:1-3 ***Bring again the captivity:*** In the midst of great national turmoil, God delivered a message of hope to the people. The foregone conclusion was that they would go into captivity, which thing the people did not believe at the time this message was delivered. Regardless of their beliefs, however, they would go into captivity, but would eventually return to the land. ***Israel and Judah:*** Israel, the northern kingdom, went into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. The southern kingdom was soon to go into Babylonian captivity. A remnant from all Israel, from both the northern and southern kingdoms, would eventually return as a united Israel after the Babylonian captivity.

30:4-11 This passage looks beyond the return of the Jews to the land. It looks to a time in the latter days when the returned people would serve David their king. Reference is thus Messianic, for Jesus would be the descendant of David who would sit upon the throne of the Lord in heaven (See comments Dn 7:13,14; At 2:21-30). ***Break your bonds:*** The beginning of God's defense for His people began when He allowed the Medo-Persians to overthrow the Babylonians, which event took place in 539 B.C. The Medo-Persians then allowed all former captives to return to their homelands, which homelands were at the time under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire. ***Full end of all nations***: Those nations that took Israel into captivity, the Assyrians and Babylonians, would cease to exist. However, Israel would continue because of the preserving work of God to carry out His purpose for the existence of Israel (See 46:27,28).

30:12-17 ***You have no healing medicines:*** Because they had digressed into a culture of sin, there was no one to help them out of their predicament simply because everyone else was also sick with sin. Only God could help them. And for Him to help, He had to drive them back to the standard of His law. In order to accomplish this, God had to humiliate them with captivity. Once He had taken away their arrogance and self-sufficiency, He was able to bring them home to His law, and then to their homeland. ***Those who devour you:*** Since God used the nations to discipline His people, only He could bring them out of captivity by working among the nations. And since no one cared for the Jews, God reached out with compassion to His chosen people through whom He would bring the Messiah into the world.

30:18-24 ***City ... palace:*** Both the city and royal palace would be rebuilt. However, there is no mention of the rebuilding of the temple, since the temple was never in the original plan of God as a center of faith for Israel. God originally intended that the tabernacle be rebuilt continually throughout their history and moved among all the territories of the twelve tribes. It was David's desire that the temple be built, to whom God made a concession, and thus it was built by Solomon (See 1 Ch 17). In the termination of national Israel, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C., God turned the clock back to His original plan. There would be no king of Israel on earth. Worship would not be centralized around a building. Earthly kings split the loyalty of the people between God and man, and the temple localized the religious ceremonies of the law. Captivity taught the Jews to be loyal only to God, without the physical props of a king, capital, or temple. They learned that since they could be in a relationship with God while scattered throughout the world, then they could do the same when they returned to Palestine. ***My people ... your God:*** While the Israelites were in apostasy in Palestine, God turned them over to the nations. The repentant remnant, however, would restore the covenant in that they would be obedient to the conditions of the covenant. They would know that they were the people of God. ***Whirlwind of the Lord:*** Reference could be to the Holy Spirit who goes forth and works in the affairs of man. At least reference is to the power of God to bring about His eternal plan of things for which He created the world. God will accomplish His eternal plan regardless of the activities of man on earth. (The statements of 31:1 should conclude the subject of this chapter.)

Chapter 31
RESTORATION

The statements of this chapter could be divided into a message primarily to the northern kingdom (vss 2-22), a message to the southern kingdom (vss 23-26), and a message to both kingdoms as the united people of God (vss 27-40).

31:1-6 ***Grace:*** God was going to accomplish among the nations that which Israel could not do, that is, deliver herself from captivity. Everlasting love: God never falls out of love with man (See comments Jn 3:16). Because God still loved Israel, He would be faithful to His promise to restore them to the land. ***I will build you:*** This is a promise of the restoration of those who went into the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C. They had been in captivity over 130 years before the south-

ern kingdom went into its final captivity in 586 B.C. They had possibly given up hope of any restoration to Palestine, and thus this prophecy was sent to them in order to give them encouragement. They were witnessing from afar the destruction of the land, and thus possibly gave up all hope that there would ever be a restoration of the remnant and reestablishment of Israel.

31:7-14 The return of the renewed remnant would be a joyous occasion. It would be a time for all the remnant of Israel to return to their homeland. ***North country:*** In traveling from Assyria and Babylonia to the east, the sojourners would have to go via the Fertile Crescent, and thus come from the north into the land of Palestine. God is pictured in this context as a loving Father who has compassion on His firstborn. They were His firstborn, for Israel was the first nation that God called into existence when He called them out of Egyptian captivity. ***From the hand ... who was stronger:*** Israel could not have delivered herself from captivity, for the yoke of the captors had to first be broken. Only God could break the yoke of the Babylonians. The Medo-Persians, through the work of God, broke the Babylonian Empire, which empire had previously conquered the Assyrian Empire. The Medo-Persians thus controlled all the territory that was formerly controlled by the Assyrians and Babylonians. The return of the Jewish exiles, therefore, was a relocation of Jews within the Medo-Persian Empire. Their freedom consisted of being freed from those within the Empire who used them as their servants.

31:15-17 ***Ramah:*** This was a high point that functioned as a natural boundary between the northern and southern kingdoms. When the southern kingdom was eventually taken into captivity, this was probably the location where the Babylonians assembled the captives in order to deport them to Babylonia (40:1-6). ***Rachel:*** She was the grandmother of Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim represented the northern kingdom, and thus Rachel was considered the maternal ancestor of the northern kingdom. In this context, she grieves over the exile of her children who had gone into Assyrian captivity. ***Restrain your voice:*** The exhortation is that Rachel cease her crying for her lost children, for they will be found and returned.

31:18-20 ***Smote on my thigh:*** This was a gesture of grief. Since Ephraim grieved over their sin, then those of the northern kingdom were ready to be brought back into the land. Ephraim would thus be remembered because of repentance.

31:21,22 ***Signposts:*** Whether literal or figurative, both meanings for a signpost would be needed to direct Israel home. Those who were taken in the Assyrian captivity would have been gone from the land of Palestine for almost a century and a half. These returnees would have been several generations removed from their forefathers who were originally taken into captivity. They thus needed direction in order to return to the land possessions of their fathers. But they surely also needed spiritual direction and encouragement to make their way back to the roots of the law of the covenant and the sacrificial ceremonies of the law. ***A woman will encompass a man:*** This was probably a proverb whose meaning has been lost. But we could possibly understand it to mean that Israel, as the bride of God, would cling to Him as she should have throughout her history. They had committed spiritual adultery by marrying themselves to foreign gods. They were religious polygamists. But in the future they would never leave God to run after idol gods.

31:23-26 Jeremiah's immediate audience, Judah, is here pictured in her restoration to truth in beliefs and behavior. At the time of writing, the people were in great social turmoil. But when they returned from captivity, they would carry on with a peaceful life. Jeremiah's words gave them hope for the future, and thus encouraged them to relinquish to their fate in captivity. If they surrendered to the Babylonians, things would eventually go well for their posterity. But if they resisted, the fathers and mothers who were killed would have no posterity.

31:27-30 All Israel, both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, would be brought back into the land. As a united people, God would bless their new existence in the land. ***Pluck up ... to build:*** They were plucked up because of apostasy. They would be rebuilt because of repentance. ***Die for his own iniquity:*** Instead of being punished as a nation for sin, those who would sin in the new Israel would be held individually responsible for the consequences of each person's sin. National accountability would pass to individual accountability. ***The fathers have eaten a sour grape:*** The generation that followed the initial captivities may have complained that they were suffering because of the sin of their fathers. But they must be patient. God would treat those of the repentant remnant as individuals, thus holding them individually accountable for their sins. The children often suffer the consequences of the father's sins, but they do not suffer the guilt of their sin. Each man will give account of his own sin before God (2 Co 5:10; see Ez 18:3,20,21).

31:31-34 This is a very significant context that pointed to a new and exciting era, one in which all Christians now live. Before the cross of Jesus, God had a covenant relationship with Israel. Jews were born into this covenant relationship. As they grew up after birth, Jewish children were instructed concerning the covenant that God had made with the nation of Israel. However, this covenant was to change to a new covenant that would demand a different means by which one would come into a covenant relationship with God. In this context, God stated that He would establish a new covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah, which covenant would include all nations. Conditions for entering this new covenant would be different from the old covenant. In verse 33 God explained that the new covenant would be different in the sense that God would first put His law in their hearts. In other words, when one would come into a covenant relationship with God under the new covenant, the law of God would already be in one's heart in the sense that he would be an obedient subject to the law of God. One would already have been taught to know God before coming into a relationship with God under the new covenant. Before one is born again in obedience to the gospel, He is taught to "know God" and that which is necessary for obedience to be saved. One is thus taught the conditions for the covenant relationship before he comes into the covenant relationship. This was certainly the thought behind Jesus'

statement of John 6:45 that all are to be taught of God. When one is taught the lordship of Jesus and the gospel, his response should be that he would seek to come into a covenant relationship with God (See comments Hb 8:8-12; 10:16).

31:35-40 God's promise is based on His past performance. Since He has been faithful in carrying out His promises, then He will carry out all promises that He now makes concerning Israel. They will once again come into the land. ***The city will be built:*** Before the city was destroyed, here is a promise that it would be rebuilt (See comments Er & Ne). ***Forever:*** We must understand this as a reference to certainty, not unending existence. The physical city of Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt a number of times throughout history. It still exists today. If the passage is Messianic, then reference here could be to the new Jerusalem, the church, that will exist without end.

Chapter 32

32:1-5 At this time Jeremiah was under house arrest because he spoke against King Zedekiah and his inevitable captivity (21:9; 38:2). The Babylonians had laid siege to Jerusalem, and thus the prophecies concerning Zedekiah's capture were coming to pass.

32:6-15 Anathoth was Jeremiah's home area. What transpired in this context was a prophecy. Hanamel was sent by God to Jeremiah in order to present the opportunity for Jeremiah to purchase a parcel of land that was his right to buy as a close relative. When Jeremiah perceived that the offer was the work of the Lord, he weighed out the designated purchase price in silver, for there was no coined money in Judah. All the legal procedures were followed concerning the purchase of land, including a sealed deed and an open deed for public examination. At the time, the field was overrun by the Babylonians who were laying siege to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Jeremiah bought the land at the market value in order to demonstrate that in the future, even after Jeremiah's death, the land would be used by the descendants of his family. Israel would be restored to Palestine.

32:16-25 Jeremiah himself probably wondered concerning the act of purchasing the land. His prayer to God reaffirmed the majesty of God in view of the calamity that Jerusalem was enduring at the very time he made the purchase. Jeremiah rehearsed the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian captivity. Throughout the struggles of Israel's deliverance, God prevailed, and thus has a renowned name for what He did. After their deliverance from Egypt, however, they continued to fall from being loyal to God. Nevertheless, God remained faithful. The consequence of their unfaithfulness was taking place at the walls of Jerusalem where the Babylonians were building siege ramps against the city. What God had spoken in the past was coming true. Jeremiah was reassured, therefore, that what God had prophesied concerning the future, would come to pass. Zedekiah and the people would not only be taken into captivity, but there would be a restoration of the righteous remnant in the years to come.

32:26-44 ***Israel ... Judah:*** The northern kingdom, Israel, had already been taken into Assyrian captivity. In reference to the history of the nation in these statements, all twelve tribes are under consideration concerning the apostasy and punishment. Jeremiah reaffirmed the certainty of God's judgment upon His people because of their apostasy, which apostasy went as far as causing their sons and daughters to walk through the fire that was dedicated to the Moabite god, Molech. The only hope for Israel and Judah was to pass through the trials of national calamity, and then go into captivity where a new generation of Jews would be born. After the seventy years of captivity, a new generation would return to the land. ***For this city has been to Me a provocation:*** We must keep in mind that the centralization of government and faith in one city of Palestine helped lead to the division and apostasy of the people. God never intended that Israel have a king, or a capital for a centralized government and stationary place of religious ceremonies. Israel wanted all three, and thus had to pay the price for what these three things did in encouraging the division of the twelve tribes and their apostasy. The kings led the loyalty of the people away from the sole kingship of God who originally planned that He be their only king in heaven. The centralization of government in one city in Judah marginalized all other cities of the land. And the centralization of sacrifices at the temple excluded the rest of the tribal groups from hosting the annual meetings at the tabernacle which was to be circulated throughout all twelve tribal territories. In the historical context of the destruction of Jerusalem, God was removing the king, the capital and the temple. That which encouraged their division and apostasy was being taken away in order that they be restored as a united remnant. ***I will gather them ... bring them ... to this place:*** The number of the repentant remnant would be so small that Jerusalem would be sufficient as a place for the restoration of the annual sacrifices. The Jews would be restored to the land, but they would never again possess the entirety of the land. They would never again be the glorious nation they were in the days of David and Solomon. The restored remnant would remain a small community of Jews who would wait for the Messiah to come, and then send forth His word to all the world from Jerusalem (See comments Is 2:1-4).

Chapter 33

33:1-13 This is the second message of God to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the guard. Amidst an attack on the city, famine and pestilence, the fall of the city was imminent. God sought to reveal things concerning their future what should bring encouragement for those who would believe that God is working in the present. ***Siege ramps and by the sword:*** The situation was desperate. This would possibly be the eve of the fall of the city. Those houses that were built next to the walls on the outside of the city had already been torn down. The materials from the houses were being used to build the siege ramps against the walls. God had hidden His face from the city, and thus it was destined to doom. ***I will bring it health and healing:*** Though the city would fall, God made a promise that He would rebuild it with moral health and security. The destruction of the city was the way to their healing. The city, and all Judah, had to die in order to

live. ***I will pardon all their iniquities:*** The context reaches into the future when God would remember their sins no more. The restoration of Israel in the future would be the sign that God had forgiven them. This would be a national forgiveness, but in the future there would be individual forgiveness in Christ. In the case of Israel, the only way to the joy that they would experience in the future was to endure the calamity that was upon them at the time these words were revealed to Jeremiah. Israel had to be totally laid destitute before she could be healed. All her material wealth had to be taken away in order for her to focus on the spiritual.

33:14-18 These were words of consolation and encouragement. Though the people would have to suffer the end of a national independent state of Israel in Palestine, they would not be terminated as a people of God. ***The days are coming:*** The Lord now takes their minds beyond the immediate circumstances of national Israel in order to focus on the future when the Branch comes. ***The Branch of righteousness:*** In the new order to come, Israel and Judah would be as one nation. Jesus would unite all men under His kingdom reign. As the true offspring of David, He would make this possible for His reign would be over all things (Ep 1:20-23). In Him there would be neither Jew nor Gentile (Gl 3:26-29). ***David will never lack a man to sit on the throne:*** Jesus would be the finality of those kings who would reign on earth upon the throne of David. He is now reigning by the authority of this throne which was always in heaven at the right hand of God (See comments Dn 7:13,14; At 2:24-35). ***The priests:*** All Christians are priests of God (1 Pt 2:5,9). As long as there is a Christian, then there will always be those who offer the sacrifice of their lives unto God (Rm 12:1,2).

33:19-26 ***If you can break My covenant:*** The fact was that since man cannot interfere with the natural processes of day and night, then man cannot break God's covenant with man. Since the orderly occurrence of natural laws continues without interruption, then God will continue with His plan to set one of David's seed upon the throne of David. From this seed, He will increase the people of God without number. ***Considered what this people have spoken:*** Some doubted that God would restore His people. What God reveals here is that after the restoration of the exiles from the seventy years of captivity, there would be proof that what is revealed here would eventually come to pass in Christ and the church. We can look back and understand these prophecies, but those who initially received them did not understand (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). The generations that lived after them would witness the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies. They would witness the fulfillment in the restoration of Israel. Their witness of the fulfillment in the restoration would thus give them hope that God would eventually reveal the Branch.

Chapter 34
BROKEN PROMISES

34:1-7 The date of this pronouncement was 586 B.C., the time when Nebuchadnezzar was in the process of besieging the city of Jerusalem, Lachish and Azekah. The cities of Lachish and Azekah were under attack by the Babylonians, but had not yet fallen. Those in Jerusalem were possibly hoping that the Egyptians would come to their rescue, but this was a false hope. God had determined the fall of Jerusalem and Judah, as well as Zedekiah being taken into captivity. Jeremiah thus urged Zedekiah to accept his fate and submit to Babylon (See 21:1-10; 32:3-5; 37:8-10; 38:17-23). ***All the kingdoms:*** When Babylon overthrew a nation, those of the nation were recruited to fight with the Babylonian forces. This phrase refers to all the nations that were under the control of the Babylonian Empire. ***You ... will surely be taken:*** See 52:8-11 (39:7; 2 Kg 25:5,6; Ez 12:13).

34:8-16 The law permitted one to give himself into the service of another Israelite. However, after seven years of service, the servant was to be freed (Ex 21:2; Dt 15:2). Those to whom Jeremiah spoke this message had long forgotten God's law concerning servants. ***Covenant:*** In compliance to the law, those who had servants made an oath to allow everyone who was a servant to go free. This action was probably taken because every person was needed to help fight against the Babylonians. However, when they assumed that Egypt would possibly come to their rescue, they reneged on their agreement. They thus violated an oath they had made for themselves and the promise to the servants, as well as the law that an Israelite could not keep a fellow Israelite in bondage over seven years. They had made a step in the right direction, but then backed down. They thus profaned the name of God by making an oath in His name, and then refusing to keep their commitment to the oath.

34:17-22 ***I proclaim liberty for you:*** Because the people refused to honor their oath to set the captives free, the liberty about which the Lord would proclaim would be the reverse. Instead of going from captivity to freedom, which they had promised their servants, they would go from freedom to captivity. ***Who has gone away from you:*** The Babylonian forces had laid siege to Jerusalem. However, the arrival of the Egyptians from the south posed a threat to the Babylonians (See 37:1-10). Nebuchadnezzar thus briefly left his siege of Jerusalem in order to deal with the Egyptians. When the Egyptians were defeated, Nebuchadnezzar returned to his siege of Jerusalem.

Chapter 35
THE RECHABITES

35:1-5 This event took place during the reign of Jehoiakim, a short time after the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians at Carchemish in 606 B.C. ***Rechabites:*** This was a nomadic people among the Israelites who were probably descendants from the Kenites (1 Ch 2:55; see Jg 1:16). ***Jonadab:*** See 2 Kg 10:15-28. The influence of their spiritual father had great impact on the customs of this people. He had made a proclamation concerning their behavior, which proclamation became one of the cultural identification marks of the people. ***Into the house of the Lord:*** In order to confirm the stand of the Rechabites for the customs of their fathers, Jeremiah took them to a public place in the temple courtyard. He did this in order that all witness their commitment to the beliefs of their fathers.

35:6-11 What had been commanded by Jonadab was stated about two centuries before Jeremiah called for the Rechabites to give a testimony concerning their commitment. What Jonadab had committed his descendants to do was to live a nomadic life in the deserts and among the Israelites. Their presence in the city at this time was only because of their fear of the Babylonians and Syrians.

35:12-17 With the command of one man, the culture of a committed people was determined for two centuries. But with Israel, they would not even listen to God, but forsook His commandments and ran after their own desires. Add to this the fact that the Rechabites had no prophets to constantly remind them that they should keep the commandments of Jonadab. Judah had all the prophets of God, and they refused to listen.

35:18,19 The faithful obedience of the Rechabites is a testimony to the commitment of a people to remain true to the righteous proclamations of their forefathers. Their reward for their faithfulness was that they would always exist as a people. And thus to this day among the Bedouin tribal groups of the Near East there are those who adhere to many of the traditions of the Rechabites.

Chapter 36
THE SCROLL

36:1-3 ***So that I may forgive:*** God now resorted to the power of the written word in order to stimulate repentance (See Hb 4:12). He had tried every means by which to encourage His people to repent and turn to Him. If they could read of all the warnings that He had given, they would possibly repent. God's efforts through the writing of His pronouncements, therefore, was to give them every chance to change their ways, and thus change their destiny.

36:4-8 ***Baruch:*** Baruch functioned as Jeremiah's stenographer. He recorded the words that Jeremiah dictated. God inspired Jeremiah through the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:20,21). Jeremiah spoke and Baruch recorded. We today have the privilege of reading what Baruch wrote. ***I am detained:*** We are not told by Jeremiah why he could not go to the temple. He could have been sick, ceremonially unclean, or restricted from going to the temple by the authorities.

36:9-19 The scroll was produced several months before an appropriate time came for its reading. The appropriate time was when a fast was called and the people were gathered together at the temple. Nebuchadnezzar had made an attack on Jerusalem the year before, and thus the people were now prepared to hear what was revealed on the scroll. As a result, the reading of the message brought a response from the people. When Michaiah heard the words of the reading, he hastened to have Baruch read it to his father and the other princes who were assembled. When they heard the contents of the scroll, they too were deeply disturbed. They concluded that the contents had to be revealed to the king. Before they did such, however, they questioned Baruch concerning the origin of the message. They wanted to be sure that it came from Jeremiah, the prophet. They knew that the message would probably be rejected by the king, and thus they told Baruch that he and Jeremiah should hide themselves.

36:20-26 ***He cut it with a penknife:*** The message of the scroll had its effect on the king. Against the protest of the princes, who considered the message of the scroll to be the word of the prophet of God, Jehoiakim cut up the scroll and threw it in a fire. He did the opposite of what his father, Josiah, would have done (See 2 Kg 22:10-14). Instead of repenting, he arrogantly lashed out. He immediately called for the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch, whom he would probably have killed, as was done to the prophet Urijah (26:20-24).

36:27-32 ***Take again another scroll:*** We are not told exactly what was written on the first scroll, or what was again written on the second scroll. Baruch may have incorporated the material into the scroll that we now have as Jeremiah. We know that the message of the scroll was not the entirety of the book of Jeremiah that we have today, for the message of the scroll was read three times in one day to different groups of people. The message that was written on the first scroll was read and expanded in the second. Since there were approximately twenty years left in the ministry of Jeremiah, more material of his life and messages were recorded by Baruch, which material we have in the present book of Jeremiah. ***You have burned this scroll:*** Jehoiakim's disrespect for the word of God cost him the reign of his posterity, and the dignity of his death. Jeremiah later prophesied that he would be disgraced in his death (22:18). ***No one to sit upon the throne:*** The curse that was pronounced upon the posterity of Jehoiakim was that he would have no heritage of kings that would reign upon the throne of David. Jehoiachin, his son, did reign for three months, but he was never considered a permanent king who reigned in Jerusalem. He surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and was taken into Babylonian captivity in 597 B.C.

The Destruction Of Jerusalem
(37:1 – 40:6)

Outline: (1) Futile efforts before the destruction (37:1 – 38:28), (2) The destruction of Jerusalem (39:1-10), (3) Deliverance of Jeremiah (39:11 – 40:6)

Chapter 37
FUTILE EFFORTS BEFORE THE DESTRUCTION

37:1-5 ***Nebuchadnezzar ... made king:*** God originally did not plan that Israel have a king on earth reigning over His people. He did not because an earthly king would have split their loyalty between Him and the king. Nevertheless, God relinquished to the desires of Israel and allowed them to have a king. However, the king that they would have had to be chosen and anointed by Him. After the anointing of the first kings, Israel later digressed from having God-anointed kings, to kings they chose for themselves. And at this time in their history, they had Zedekiah who was a king appointed by a foreign power. In the case of Zedekiah, he was unfaithful to his word (27:11-15), and thus led Jerusalem in rebellion against Babylon, which rebellion eventually led to the destruction of Jerusalem. ***Pharaoh's army:*** This would have been Pharaohhophra of Egypt (44:30). He intended to engage the Chaldeans in battle, and thus was coming to Jerusalem to help Judah. This brought a futile hope to Zedekiah and the Jews

who were being besieged at Jerusalem. Zedekiah thus asked Jeremiah that he pray for their deliverance. However, God's revelation through Jeremiah was not what he expected.

37:6-10 Zedekiah's request to pray to the Lord was a mockery of the Lord, for he had first consulted his prophets to pray to their false gods. As a final effort in a desperate hope, he at this time turned to God to see if there could be any help. The people had exhausted their efforts, and thus their last resort was to the God who created them as a nation. It is difficult to believe that Zedekiah was truly sincere in his hope that God would actually help them. The situation was that they were so desperate that they were praying to all their gods. ***Do not deceive yourselves:*** There was no hope. Even if wounded Chaldean soldiers were left after their attack of Pharaoh's army, they would still bring down Jerusalem with fire.

37:11-15 When the Chaldeans left to engage the Egyptians, Jeremiah took the opportunity to go to Anathoth in order to take possession of the land that he had purchased (32:6-12). Since he had previously encouraged the people to give themselves over to the Chaldeans (21:8-10), the sentry assumed that Jeremiah was leaving Jerusalem for good in order to join the Chaldeans. Jeremiah was arrested, and dealt with according to the desires of many of the leaders (38:1-6). What seems to be the situation is that the older and more honorable leaders had already been taken in the 597 B.C. captivity with Jehoiachin (36:11-19). The only leaders who were left were those subordinates who were defiant to the counsel of God concerning Jeremiah's advice to surrender to the Chaldeans.

37:16-21 The pit where they confined Jeremiah was deplorable to the point that it endangered his health. ***Is there any word from the Lord:*** Zedekiah was desperate at this time, for the Chaldeans had returned from their engagement and victory over the Egyptians. ***Where now are your prophets:*** Zedekiah and the people had run out of time by listening to the false proclamations of those who claimed to be sent from God, but were only sent by themselves. Since their predictions that Jerusalem would not be attacked by the Babylonians had failed, they were no longer in the picture as trusted men to be consulted. Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the fall of Jerusalem were being fulfilled, and thus Zedekiah sought any revelation concerning his own destiny. His destiny was that he would be delivered into the hands of the Babylonians. ***Commit Jeremiah into the court:*** At least Zedekiah had a conscience that was favorable toward Jeremiah. He delivered Jeremiah from the dungeon and commissioned that he be fed a continual ration of food.

Chapter 38

38:1-6 Though Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard, he was able to communicate with the soldiers, encouraging them to turn themselves over to the Chaldeans (32:9,12). ***Booty:*** He who would give himself over to the Chaldeans would take away his own life as booty from the battle. He would live. ***He is in your hand:*** Weakness was at this time manifested in Zedekiah. He could not stand up against the hostility of his princes, and thus he had to a great extent lost the confidence of those arrogant and stiffnecked leaders who still believed that they could somehow hold out against the attack of the Babylonians. ***The cistern:*** This empty water pit was a sufficient prison for Jeremiah whom the leaders wanted to silence. When a man of God stands firm for the truth of God's word, he might find himself sunken in the mud of a cistern, ostracized from the people. In all the calamity that befell Jeremiah for his stand for the truth of God, he did not in these final days of Jerusalem, fall from his ministry.

38:7-13 No one would have suspected that a foreigner living among the Israelites would have had compassion on the prophet. The actions of the Ethiopian prove that he was a true proselyte, and thus a believer in Jeremiah and his word from God. ***Thirty men:*** The compassion of the Ethiopian stirred Zedekiah to do that which was right. The thirty men were to make sure that the Ethiopian was protected when he carried out the deed of pulling Jeremiah from the cistern.

38:14-23 This was Zedekiah's final conversation with Jeremiah. In it the desperate king sought revelation concerning his future, which revelation had already been told to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was afraid of turning himself over to the king of Babylon because of those who had already done so. He thought that they would encourage the Babylonians to hand down retribution to him because of his wicked treatment of them. ***This city will not be burned:*** Zedekiah had to make a decision that would affect all the lives of those in Jerusalem and the existence of the city itself. If he turned himself over to the Babylonians, the Babylonians would terminate their siege and save the city. However, the people still had to go into captivity.

38:24-28 As soon as Jeremiah left the presence of the king, the princes questioned him concerning what he had said to Zedekiah. Jeremiah revealed to them only that which would satisfy their inquiries. Jeremiah did not tell them all that transpired between him and the king. What he did reveal, however, satisfied them.

Chapter 39
THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

39:1-3 After about a 30-month siege against Jerusalem, the city eventually fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (See ch 52; 2 Kg 25; 2 Ch 36:11,12). Archaeological discoveries have confirmed that the names Rabsaris and Rabmag were titles of military officer positions in the Babylonian army. This would indicate that the other names that are given here were also titles for military positions.

39:4-10 Instead of surrendering himself to Nebuchadnezzar as Jeremiah had previously advised, Zedekiah fled the scene of the defeated city. ***Riblah:*** This was evidently the Syrian military headquarters of the Chaldeans while they were in Palestine. ***Slew the sons of Zedekiah:*** Because Zedekiah did not follow the advice of Jeremiah, he had to pay the price for his rebellion. Before his own eyes, he had to watch his children killed. The cowardly leadership of Zedekiah also resulted in the death of the nobles of Judah. ***Nebuzaradan:*** This was the title of the commander of the Babylonian army. ***Burned with fire:*** The royal palace and temple were burned.

The walls of the city were broken down in order to make the area defenseless. Nebuzaradan left the devastated country in the hands of many of the poor.

DELIVERANCE OF JEREMIAH

39:11-14 Only when the wicked leaders of Judah were overthrown was the righteous Jeremiah freed. See 40:1-6 for another possible occasion when Jeremiah was released during these chaotic times. ***Gedaliah:*** Ahikam, Gedaliah's father, protected Jeremiah after the temple sermon (26:24). It is possible that Gedaliah and his family went over to the Babylonians before the fall of the city. From the testimony of Gedaliah, Nebuchadnezzar was informed that Jeremiah was speaking among the people in the city that they should surrender to the Babylonians. As a result of this information, Nebuchadnezzar showed kindness to Jeremiah.

39:15-18 The righteous deed of Ebedmelech for his rescuing Jeremiah from the cistern was rewarded. Those who had heard of Ebedmelech's kindness toward Jeremiah were possibly seeking to find him in order to kill him for his good deed. But Ebedmelech's faith in Jeremiah and the Lord were rewarded with the preservation of his life. His booty from the calamity of the fall of Jerusalem was his own life.

Chapter 40

40:1-6 See 39:11-14. There is a great deal of time involved in the matters of making judgments by the Babylonians and the destruction of the city. Jeremiah was first released from the imprisonment by his Jewish countrymen (ch 39). He was then taken to his own house in Jerusalem. He remained there while the city and its walls were being torn down. During this time, Gedaliah was appointed by the Babylonians to be the governor of Judah. Once the city was destroyed, Jeremiah had to be taken before Gedaliah's administration in Mizpah. When the walls had been broken down and the city was being burned, the captives were moved to Ramah in order to be deported to Babylon. Since Jeremiah was moved with the captives to Ramah, we would assume that he, as all captives, was brought in chains to Ramah. But when Nebuzaradan found him among the captives, he apologized to Jeremiah, and then offered him the choices found in this context. ***Now Jeremiah had not yet gone back***: While Jeremiah was still making up his mind whether to stay in Judah or go to Babylon, Nebuzaradan suggested that he might want to join Gedaliah, who was now established as the governor of Judah. Jeremiah chose to stay with Gedaliah and the people.

Post Destruction Turmoil (40:7 – 45:5)

Outline: (1) Governorship of Gedaliah (40:7 – 41:3), (2) Atrocities of Ishmael (41:4-18), (3) Flight to Egypt (42:1 – 44:30), (4) Message to Baruch (45:1-5)

GOVERNORSHIP OF GEDALIAH

40:7-12 Judah was at this time established as a province of the Babylonian Empire. Gedaliah, one from the prominent Jewish families, was made governor of the land. Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam, a prominent person during the reign of Josiah and Jehoiakim (See 26:24; 2 Kg 22:12-14). He was a man of faith, and thus believed the word that was spoken by Jeremiah. He thus went over to the Babylonians during the siege of the city, and later was appointed governor of Judah by the Babylonians. His governorship possibly extended to about five years. It was terminated by his assassination. This conspiracy led to another deportation of Jews in 582/81 B.C. (52:30). ***Ishmael ... Jonathan ... Seraiah ... Jezaniah:*** These were possibly self-appointed representatives of the remnant of people whom the Babylonians left in Judah. Though Gedaliah promised that he would represent them fairly before the Babylonians, there was a conspiracy by Ishmael. Ishmael was of the royal family (41:1), and thus his scheme to assassinate Gedaliah was an act of jealousy. Since Gedaliah had not gone over to the Babylonians, Ishmael possibly thought that Gedaliah was a traitor, and thus should not be the governor of Judah. Since he was of the royal family, Ishmael possibly thought that it was his right to be the governor.

40:13-16 ***Baalis:*** We are not told the reason why Baalis wanted to kill Gedaliah. It may have been that he wanted to recover some territory that he had previously lost to the Israelites. Whatever the case, he used Ishmael to carry out his evil deed. ***Johanan:*** This man was faithful to the governorship of Gedaliah, and thus warned him of the conspiracy. Unfortunately, Gedaliah was somewhat naive concerning any danger of assassination, but also noble in his character. He refused to listen to the warning of threats against his life, and subsequently he paid the price for his naivety.

Chapter 41

41:1-3 Treachery took advantage of the goodwill of a naive governor. The result of his naivety was his own death and the death of many others who were following the instructions of God to submit to the Babylonians. Because Ishmael was an arrogant guerilla leader who was born of royal blood, he saw Gedaliah as a governor both weak and compromising. Though Ishmael was following after his wicked rebellious spirit, we must not forget that God always turns Satan's work through people against himself. In this case, God wanted to humble the defiant Jews. He thus allowed this massacre to happen in order to further infuriate the Babylonians. As a result of the events that took place in reference to the evil deeds of Ishmael, the Babylonians came again and took more captives into Babylonia in 582/81 B.C., thus decimating the population of Palestine. At this time, the Babylonians also extended their raid into Egypt, taking from there fugitive Jews who sought to escape.

ATROCITIES OF ISHMAEL

41:4-10 ***Certain men came from Shechem:*** These were mourning pilgrims who came with their offerings. Since the atrocity of Ishmael was so hidden, the people did not know what had transpired the previous day. The wickedness of Ishmael and his men was here manifested in that they killed seventy innocent and sincere men. God surely knew that such people as Ishmael and his men were left among the remnant

that the Babylonians left in the land. Therefore, more cleansing of the land of these wicked people had to take place. Further cleansing was carried out by the Babylonians in 582/81 B.C. when they made another raid on the land.

41:11-15 ***The people ... came back:*** Ishmael had taken many princesses of the royal family with him when he was going over to the Ammonites. It must be noted that he possibly accused Gedaliah of being a traitor in going over to the Babylonians. However, he himself was also a traitor when he went over to the Ammonites. His reason for killing Gedaliah and his princes, therefore, was possibly out of jealousy, for Ishmael probably thought that he should have been appointed as governor of the land. But his actions in this situation revealed his wicked character. Once the people heard what he had done in killing innocent people, they turned from him and fled to Johanan.

41:16-18 Johanan, and those with him, assumed that the Babylonians would make an indiscriminate raid on the remnant of the Jews because of what Ishmael had done. Not knowing what to do, they gathered everyone together at Chimham in order to make their flight into Egypt. It is at this time that Jeremiah again begins his messages to the remnant.

Chapter 42
FLIGHT TO EGYPT

42:1-6 This was a situation where the people were tired of conflict and bloodshed. At the time, they thought that the only recourse to escape the reprisals of the Babylonians for the death of Gedaliah was to flee to Egypt. There may have been some desire on the part of some to stay in Judah, but in their hearts they wanted to flee. ***The Lord your God:*** They may have still been overcoming their idolatrous culture with which they had lived for decades. Their use of the pronoun "your" indicates that they did not have a monotheistic relationship with the true God of heaven. They had been steeped in idolatry for so many decades that they could not think of only one God. Their idol gods had failed them, and thus they turned to the God of Jeremiah as a last hope. ***I will pray ... according to your words:*** They had promised that they would obey the words that came from Jeremiah's God, which promise they later failed to keep. It seems that Jeremiah made the prayer based on the promise of the people, knowing that the people probably would not listen to him, as they had not listened to him in the past.

42:7-17 ***After ten days:*** The people needed to settle down before an answer came from the Lord. ***Called ... all:*** This was not a private or secret meeting among the leaders, but among all the people involved. ***If you remain:*** The message was clear. God promised that if they remained in Judah, no harm would come to them from the Babylonians. They would prosper in the land. In the historical context, they would in seventy years be joined by those who would return from captivity, for in seventy years the Medo-Persians would take control of Palestine upon their defeat of the Babylonian Empire. ***I will relent:*** We must not confuse this statement with human emotions. God said that He would not carry out the calamity that He would bring on them if they would obey His will. God had considered that the calamity that He had already brought on Judah was sufficient to change their culture of idolatry, and thus their course in history. ***Do not be afraid:*** God called on them to exercise faith in Him. They had no reason to expect a retaliation from Babylon. They simply had to trust in God to protect them. ***But if you say:*** Jeremiah anticipated their reply to God's request that they remain in Judah. The fact was that if they fled to Egypt, they would continue to experience war, pestilence and famine. This did happen when Nebuchadnezzar went into Egypt in 582/81 B.C. on a raid to defeat Egypt and take captives from there to Babylon.

42:18-22 ***See this place no more:*** They had to make the choice. God would not make the choice for them. If they chose to go to Egypt, then they would suffer the anger of God, and thus would never return to Judah. They would suffer the same fate as those who were carried away captive to Babylon. ***Deceive yourselves:*** They truly wanted to flee to Egypt. Their request to Jeremiah to pray for instructions from God, and their promise to render obedience, was self-deception on their part, if not dishonesty. They had not yet given up their arrogant rebellion in order to be submissive to God. They would thus continue to reap the consequences of following after their own desires.

Chapter 43

43:1-3 ***All the proud men:*** These were the insolent leaders who presumed to speak for the people. Since Nebuzaradan had left the poor in the land, the remnant of the land was controlled by the rebellious leaders who had determined to flee to Egypt. In this case, they called Jeremiah a liar, for they did not believe that the pronouncement he made came to him from the Lord. They believed that it only came from Baruch. These were little men as leaders who assumed to wear the big hats of leadership for the people. They were thus blinded to the fact that great faith in God was the right course to take in their situation.

43:4-7 ***So they came into ... Egypt:*** It seems that Jeremiah and Baruch were taken by force to Egypt. If everyone was to suffer the calamity that Jeremiah pronounced, then the proud leaders seem to think that Jeremiah would suffer from the fulfillment of his own prophecy. ***Tahpanhes:*** This was a fortified city of Egypt that was located in the northeastern part of the Nile Delta. It was the logical place to receive protection from any threat of the Babylonians. However, the city did not offer protection, for the Babylonians later came and took this city and many others in Egypt in 582/81 B.C.

43:8-13 Jeremiah's first revelation from God in Egypt was an illustrated prophecy of what was to come. He took some large stones and buried them in mortar in the brickwork in front of the Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes. This was Pharaoh's official house when he visited Tahpanhes. The prophecy was that Nebuchadnezzar would come and set his throne upon these buried stones. ***My servant:*** Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant by whom He brought judgment by proxy upon His people (25:9). With no more trouble than what a shepherd exerts to put on his cloak, the Babylonians would overtake Egypt. The Jews who had fled there would be caught in the

calamity that would come over Egypt. In the artifacts of Nebuchadnezzar, he mentions his conquest of most of Egypt in 582/81 B.C. He made Egypt defenseless for the conquest and occupation of the Medo-Persian Empire that would come in 539 B.C.

Chapter 44

44:1-10 While the Jews were still in Judah, Jeremiah reminded Judah that their northern sister went into Assyrian captivity years before because of their idolatry. Now that a remnant of Judah resided in Egypt, he reminded them that God desolated Judah and Jerusalem because of the sin of idol worship. However, as the Jews were stiffnecked when they were in Judah, so they were in Egypt. They were determined to worship the queen of heaven, a goddess of fertility (See 7:16-20). The Lord thus pronounced the same condemnation upon the rebellious Israelites in Egypt. As the northern kingdom, they too had forgotten their origins. ***Wives:*** The desire to continue in worship of the queen of heaven came from the women.

44:11-14 ***Cut off all Judah:*** The punishment for idolatry was the destruction of a society of people. The influence of the idolatrous culture of Egypt was too great for the remnant of Jews who lived there. They continued in their idolatrous beliefs in a culture of idolatry, and thus refused to listen to the exhortations that came to them through Jeremiah. They were thus doomed to the same destruction as their brothers who had been taken into Babylonian captivity. In the case of those who were residing in Egypt, however, they would die by the sword and famine. Those in the captivity of Babylon would die a natural death. Neither group of captives would ever see the land of Palestine again. However, their children and grandchildren would. ***Longing to return to the land of Judah:*** They had deceived themselves into thinking that they would eventually return to Judah. Only a few fugitives escaped the sword of Nebuchadnezzar when he humbled the Egyptians and were able to return.

44:15-19 ***We will not hearken to you:*** There was no hope for this rebellious and stiffnecked generation of people. God was patient with them, but they had gone beyond the point of repentance. In this case, the women manifested their defiance to the things that Jeremiah preached. ***But since we ceased to burn incense:*** This is an illustration that while the people were enduring calamity in Judah, they had no idea that the calamity was brought on them by God. When they went into idolatry, God started sending calamities upon the people, which calamities included famine. At the time, God sent the prophets to tell them that the famines were the punishment of God for their idolatry. But they never made the connection between the calamities and the work of God in punishment for their idolatry. They only concluded that they must continue their idol sacrifices in order to restore their prosperity, which thing only took them deeper into idolatry, to the point of even making their children to pass through fire in honor of Molech. When societies give up on God, they begin to spiral down to their own destruction. God is not an option to those societies that have given up on Him. The idolatrous society of Israel could never make a connection between their calamities in their latter years when they suffered from the chastisement of God. It took the humiliation of captivity to restore them to the old paths that were taught in the word of God. Much credit must be given to the Jewish scribes in captivity as Ezra who set themselves to teach the people the word of God (See comments Er).

44:20-23 Jeremiah reminded them that the calamities that came upon them while they were in Judah were a result of their idolatrous worship and evil behavior. ***Evil of your deeds:*** There was more to the idolatrous worship than ceremonies of sacrifices and offerings. The worship involved immorality and the murder of innocent children who were offered in sacrifice to the Moabite god Molech. ***The Lord could no longer bear it:*** God was patient with them, encouraging them to repent in response to the preaching of the prophets. But because He could no longer bear the wickedness of the people, He sent forth the calamities as punishment for their evil deeds in order to encourage their repentance.

44:24-30 ***Perform your vows:*** There is irony in Jeremiah's response to the keeping of their vows. Since they had made their promise to serve the gods of their imagination, then they would reap the consequences. And the consequences would be that they would never return to honoring the true God of heaven. They made their choice of which gods or God they would serve. They thus dismissed the God of heaven from their minds, and consumed their worship with the gods they had created after their own imaginations. God would thus make an end of them simply because they no longer functioned as His people in order to accomplish His purpose for the existence of Israel. The Jews that fled to Egypt, therefore, ceased to exist, except for the few fugitives who fled when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Pharaoh-hophra in 582/81 B.C. Though there was a colony of Jews that existed in Egypt about two hundred years later, they were not descendants of these Jews who were consumed by famine and sword. A colony of these Jews may have existed in Egypt at the time of Jesus' birth, and it was to this colony that Joseph and Mary took Jesus when they fled Herod (Mt 2:13-18).

Chapter 45
MESSAGE TO BARUCH

45:1-5 Baruch was the scribe for Jeremiah. We are not told of the circumstances that caused Baruch to come under great stress. We would conclude, however, that his work as the scribe for Jeremiah brought the same reaction that was unleashed on Jeremiah. At the time, there was great calamity that was brought on by famine, pestilence, and with the turmoil of what was happening among the nations. All this was present during the fourth year of the wicked reign of Jehoiakim. Baruch believed the prophecies of Jeremiah, that Judah and Jerusalem were coming to an end. National Israel as an independent nation was in its last days. We would assume, therefore, that Baruch was emotionally affected by these circumstances. Jeremiah's exhortation to him was that he take his mind off the things of this world and focus on the things of God. In the promise that the Lord made to him, he would

escape with his life from all the calamity that was transpiring around him.

Judgment Against The Nations
(46:1 – 51:34)

Outline: (1) Judgment against Egypt (46:1-28), (2) Judgment against the Philistines (47:1-7), (3) Judgment against Moab (48:1-47), (4) Judgment against Ammon (49:1-6), (5) Judgment against Edom (49:7-22), (6) Judgment against Damascus (49:23-27), (7) Judgment against Kedar and Hazor (49:28-33), (8) Judgment against Elam (49:34-39), (9) Judgment against Babylon (50:1 – 51:64), (10) Historical pronouncements (52:1-34)

Chapter 46
JUDGMENT AGAINST EGYPT

46:1-6 Beginning with this chapter, Jeremiah fulfills his ministry as God's prophet to the nations (1:5). Not only did many of the prophets deliver the word of God to the Israelites, they also preached to those nations who in some way affected God's people. If they affected God's people in a negative manner, they would not go unpunished. ***Carchemish:*** This oracle is in reference to the battle of Carchemish that took place in 606 B.C. This was a decisive battle between the Babylonians and the remnant of the Assyrians who had called for the help of the Egyptians. This major conflict in the Near East marked the regional change from the Assyrians to the Babylonians. ***Line up the shield:*** With the expectation of victory, the Egyptians were encouraged to prepare for battle. ***Their mighty ones are beaten down:*** The expectation of victory was turned into dismay. The Babylonians defeated the Assyrian/Egyptian army at Carchemish. Because of fear, the Egyptians stumbled in fleeing from the battle scene that took place by the Euphrates River.

46:7-12 The metaphor of the flood is taken from the overflowing Nile River of Egypt during the rainy season. Egypt thought that they, with the Assyrians, would overflow the Babylonians. But they were sadly mistaken. Egypt had come with an army of mercenaries from Ethiopia, Libia and Lydia. The Egyptians became the sacrificial offering of the Lord. The mercenary army of Pharaoh-necho did not have the loyalty that was demanded to keep them in the battle against the ruthless Babylonians. Thus Pharaoh-necho was shamefully defeated. There was not enough balm in Gilead to heal the Egyptians' wounds that they received in their defeat at Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar would again attack the weakened Egyptians in 582/81 B.C. when he went to bring down retribution on those who had rebelled against Babylonian control of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

46:13-19 This message was to Egypt after her defeat at the battle of Carchemish. Her defeat left her vulnerable to attack that would come in 582/81 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar. ***Migdol ... Noph ... Tahpanhes:*** These were border towns that led into Egypt. In the message, these towns are alerted for an attack. Some believe that after the battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar pursued the Egyptian forces as they retreated to their own land. This would have been around 605/04 B.C. However, in the Babylonian Chronicle, Nebuchadnezzar recorded that he made an attack on Egypt in 582/81 B.C. ***The Lord drove them away:*** This statement credits God with the defeat of Egypt at Carchemish. Since God was using the Babylonians as His proxy to bring judgment on Judah, then we would conclude that no coalition of nations could have defeated the Babylonians. ***Let us return to our own people:*** This would be the actions of the mercenaries after the defeat of the Egyptian forces at Carchemish. Since their objective to align with Egypt had failed, they returned to their own nations. ***Egypt is a big noise:*** This would be a reference to Pharaoh-necho who had mustered a mercenary army in order to attack the Babylonians. ***So will he come:*** According to verse 26, reference here would be to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian forces. ***Noph:*** Or, Memphis. Egypt's capital city would be laid waste.

46:20-26 ***Heifer:*** Egypt was like a heifer that was feeding off the produce in the lush region of the Nile River. But suddenly she is pained by a small gadfly. She would be stung by the Babylonians from the north. ***Hired men:*** The mercenary soldiers were as clumsy fat bulls who were not trained and disciplined to be soldiers. They thus fled from the war, which may explain why the Assyrian/Egyptian coalition was defeated at Carchemish by the hardened Babylonian soldiers. ***Like a serpent:*** As the Babylonian forces axed their way through the forest of nations and cities, the Egyptians would flee as they retreated from the presence of danger. Their only defense was a hiss, for they could not stand before the Babylonians. As a woodsman clears the forest, so would the Babylonians slice through the cities of Egypt. ***No:*** Or, Thebes, the capital city of upper Egypt.

46:27,28 Whenever there were punishments poured out on those who affected Israel in a negative way, it meant deliverance for the people of God (See 30:10,11). Though God used the nations to punish His people, He eventually judged those who had arrogantly fought against the survival of His people. ***Not make a full end of you:*** God spared a remnant through whom He would continue the seedline of woman and the heritage of Davidic kings. From this seedline would come the Savior of the world.

Chapter 47
JUDGMENT AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

47:1-7 This oracle went out to the Philistines before they were attacked by the Egyptians. We are not told when this attack transpired, or by which Pharaoh. We would only assume that it would have been Pharaoh-necho on his way to engage the Babylonians at Carchemish. ***Waters rise up:*** Taking the literal setting of the rising of the flood waters of the Nile River, which meant a blessing of crops to the Egyptians, it would mean destruction to both the Egyptians and Philistines. The Babylonian forces would come from the north and consume the Philistine cities. The Babylonian Chronicle, wherein Nebuchadnezzar reported concerning his campaign into Palestine, reports that on his way to Egypt after Carchemish, he ravaged the Philistine cities. This took place around 605/04 B.C. ***Limpness of their hands:*** They had been exhausted by swinging their swords in battle against the Babylonians.

In desperation, they could do nothing but flee for their lives. ***Tyre and Sidon:*** Since these two Phoenician cities were probably in alliance with the Philistines at this time in history, they too would succumb to the flow of the Babylonian army from the north. ***Baldness ... cut:*** These were personal actions of despair. One would cut off his hair or cut himself. ***Rest and be still:*** This was a cry for relief from attack. It was a cry by the Philistines for mercy from the Lord. ***Given it charge:*** The sword of the Lord through the Babylonians could not be put into its scabbard until the punishment of the Philistines had been meted out in full. ***Caphtor:*** Though possibly a reference to Philistia (See Am 9:7), it is used also as a reference to the island of Crete (Ez 25:15,16).

Chapter 48
JUDGMENT AGAINST MOAB

48:1-5 Jeremiah here joins Isaiah as one of the prophets of God who made a special pronouncement against the Moabites. The prophecy is that their cities will be destroyed and their inhabitants will flee. On the roads leading to and from Luhith and Horonaim, there would be refugees fleeing as they mourned over the cities.

48:6-10 ***Chemosh:*** The national Moabite god would not save the people. The people would be ashamed of their god who allowed them to be destroyed. The priests, with the imagination of their national god, Chemosh, in their minds, would be taken into captivity. ***City ... valley ... plain:*** There would be no safe place in all the nation. ***Wings:*** The attack against the people would be so great that there would be no place to which the people could escape. They would need eagles' wings in order to fly away to a safe place. ***Trusted in your works ... treasures:*** The reason for their destruction would be their arrogance and materialism as a people. The nation trusted in themselves instead of putting their faith in God. ***He who keeps back his sword:*** The Lord was determined to bring judgment upon this nation. God would also bring judgment on any nation who would not lift up her sword against Moab.

48:11-17 The metaphors of this message were taken from the many vineyards that existed in Moab. Because of her great vineyards, she was wealthy. Her wine vessels were never empty. ***Settled on his dregs:*** The Moabites had become accustomed to a life of ease. The people had digressed into an indifferent society of indolence. ***They will empty his vessels:*** Their easy life was going to come to an end. They had escaped destruction for centuries, but now, their cities would be destroyed and the people taken into captivity. ***Moab has been plundered:*** At the time of the prophecy, Israel and Judah had already been taken into captivity. The Moabites had mocked them as they were taken into captivity. They mocked them because their God was not able to protect them. But this would all change. The god of the Moabites, Chemosh, would not protect them. Their pride and arrogance would also lead them into captivity. The Israelites would be restored to their land, but the Moabites would cease to exist as a nation. ***Ashamed of Bethel:*** Reference was to the golden calf that Jeroboam had set up in Bethel. The idol was the invention of the imagination of men's minds, and thus it would do nothing in protecting the people from the attack of foreign armies.

48:18-25 ***Come down from your glory:*** The fortified cities of Moab are to be destroyed, leaving the people defenseless and fleeing. When it is asked what has happened, all are called on to lament over the fall of the nation. ***Horn:*** The power of Moab is destroyed. ***Arm:*** The authority of the nation has been broken. All the major cities of the nation were defeated and destroyed.

48:26-33 ***Magnified himself against the Lord:*** This was the reason for the termination of the nation. As Israel, who also became arrogant, Moab had to be humbled and humiliated. Moab was arrogant against God's people, and thus God brought judgment down upon her. Because she jumped for joy when Israel was taken into captivity, she too would suffer the same captivity because of her haughtiness. ***Pride ... loftiness ... arrogance ... haughtiness:*** See Is 16:6-14. Every word was used by Jeremiah to describe the disgraceful attitude and character of the Moabites. ***I will wail for Moab:*** Some have suggested that verses 31 & 32 turn from the prophecy to the feelings of Jeremiah concerning the fall of Moab. Such could be the case after Jeremiah heard God's revelations concerning the fall of this relative nation of Israel. However, it is better to assume that the revelation remains unbroken, and thus the "I" in the text refers to God's lament over this nation that had long since forsaken the faith of Lot their father (Gn 19:30-38).

48:34-39 ***Cause to cease ... him who offers:*** The purpose for the punishment of Moab was to reveal that their god Chemosh was false. He could offer them no protection from destruction. Since all the altars and places of sacrifice would be destroyed, many would find their way back to faith in God. These would be those who were granted the opportunity to return from their captivity. ***Bald ... shaved ... cuts:*** The entire nation mourned the death of the nation. As independent Israel, Moab was an idolatrous nation that was brought to an end. She would no longer exist in history as the nation of Moab.

48:40-47 ***Fly as an eagle:*** The one who would destroy her with swiftness would fly down upon her as an eagle on an unsuspecting prey. Reference here would probably be to the Babylonian Empire through the kingship of Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed Moab and Ammon in 582/81 B.C. ***Strongholds are surprised:*** The slothful nature of the Moabite society could not produce a soldier who could stand before the ruthless professional soldiers of the Babylonian Empire. When the attack of the Babylonians came, therefore, the strongest Moabite soldier was surprised and terrified at the fierceness of the Babylonians. ***Visitation:*** When the Lord visited, it was a time for judgment and destruction. In the case of Moab, it was a time when the nation would come to an end. It would no longer exist as an independent nation of the world. ***Bring against the captivity:*** They would not be restored as a nation. However, a repentant remnant would be restored to their homelands when the Medo-Persian Empire took over the Babylonians in 539 B.C. When the Medes and Persians took over the former territory of the Babylonian Empire, it was the policy of Cyrus, the king of the Medo-Persian Empire, to allow former captives of the Assyrians and Babylonians to

return to their homelands, as long as their homelands were within the domain of the Medo-Persian Empire.

Chapter 49

JUDGMENT AGAINST AMMON

49:1-6 ***Settled in its cities:*** The Ammonites were land grabbers. They had stolen the land that had been given by God to Gad as a possession. Since Israel had heirs to all the land possessions, then the Ammonites had no right to take the land that had been given to Israel as an inheritance. When the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C., the Ammonites grabbed the land of Gad that was on the eastern side of the Jordan River, land that the Israelites were awarded before they crossed the Jordan to possess the land during the days of Joshua. ***Boastful ... about the valleys:*** The Ammonites trusted in the productivity of their land, and thus took pride in their wealth as a nation. Their fertile valleys and fortified cities were a thing of pride. They thus deceived themselves into thinking that no one would attack them. ***Rabbah ... daughters:*** Though they thought that they would not be attacked, Rabbah, the capital, and all the daughter cities would be burned with fire. The people would flee in confusion, running to and fro within the walls of their fortified cities that were to be destroyed. Milcom, the national god of the Ammonites, would be taken into captivity with the priests who would also go into captivity. There would be no one who would come to the rescue of the Ammonites. No one would make an effort to save her. ***Heshbon:*** Though Heshbon was actually in Moab, Ammon was evidently attacked first, with Ammonite refugees fleeing to her relative city of Heshbon (See Gn 19:37,38).

JUDGMENT AGAINST EDOM

49:7-13 See also Ob 5,6. As the descendants of Esau, the Edomites were the perpetual enemies of the Israelites since the days they came out of Egyptian captivity. ***Teman:*** See Jb 2:11; Am 1:12. ***Wisdom:*** The Edomites were not wise because they dared to afflict the people of God. ***Dedan:*** God warns the Dedanites to flee from the surrounding area of Edom, lest His destruction that He is bringing on Edom affect them. There would also be a warning in this message that the Dedanites not become involved in the affairs of Edom, especially in making an alliance against them. ***Leave your fatherless children:*** Since the fathers would be killed in battle, God would take care of their children by raising up a new generation that respected the one true and living God. ***Bozrah:*** The capital of Edom would be destroyed, and subsequently all the cities of Edom would be laid waste and not be rebuilt.

49:14-22 See Ob 1-4. ***Your fierceness has deceived you:*** The Edomites took pride in the fact that they were a fierce people. But they had deceived themselves into thinking that they were invincible. ***Dwell in the clefts of the rock:*** The city of Petra was built in a gorge of mountains, and thus was easily defended. It was almost impenetrable. Though Edom thought that no army could penetrate her natural defenses, God would bring her down. Her overconfidence in her natural defenses would lead her to be unprepared, and thus vulnerable to destruction. ***Desolation:*** God makes no promise of a surviving remnant of the Edomites. As an independent nation, she would go out of existence. The nation would be laid waste as Sodom and Gomorrah. Jeremiah's picture of the fall of Edom is a vivid description of a proud and arrogant nation coming to a close. The more the nation had exalted herself, the greater the judgment that God would bring down upon the people. The outcry of the inhabitants would be so great that it would be heard as far west as the Red Sea, her border with Egypt. Her mighty warriors would cry out in pain as a woman giving birth.

JUDGMENT AGAINST DAMASCUS

49:23-27 The capital city of Damascus is used by Jeremiah to refer to the nation of Syria. These were the Armenian people. Syria fell to the Assyrian invasion in 732 B.C. Before this date, the nation was a continual threat against the people of God (See 1 Kg 15:18-21; 20:1-21; 22:3; 2 Kg 16:5,6; Is 7:1-16). Damascus was a famous city of the Near East, but unfortunately she was located as the northern gateway for the Assyrian, Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires as they moved to control the Fertile Crescent, Palestine and Egypt. The oracle here announces the fall of her young men who have died in her streets. She was made to drink of the cup of God's wrath. ***Benhadad:*** This was the name of several of her kings (See 1 Kg 15:18-20; 2 Kg 13:24).

JUDGMENT AGAINST KEDAR & HAZOR

49:28-33 ***Kedar ... Hazor:*** These two cities probably represent the Arabian tribes to the east of Palestine and Edom (Gn 25:13; see Is 21:16,17; Ez 27:21). The one who would destroy and control this area would be Nebuchadnezzar, who would be expanding the Babylonian Empire. Since the people of these areas were primarily nomadic, the cities that they had constructed were not fortified against invasions. They were thus easily defeated and the people scattered. In this oracle of judgment, it is stated that Nebuchadnezzar plundered their herds and flocks in order to maintain his army in his continued conquest of the Near East. ***Hazor:*** Instead of representing a specific city or town, this reference is possibly to a seminomadic people of wealth in the desert. Their wealth was in their herds and flocks, and thus their devastation was the plundering of their herds and flocks by the Babylonian army.

JUDGMENT AGAINST ELAM

49:34-39 Elam represented the territory east of Babylon toward the Persian Gulf. Shushan, or Susa, was the capital. It was conquered by Ashurbanipal, the king of Assyria, in 640 B.C. It later became independent with the fall of the Assyrian Empire. During the existence of the Medo-Persian Empire, Susa became one of the capitals of the empire. Because Elam was a small country, there is little information about its history. There were exiles already in Babylon at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah. Since these exiles possibly sided with the Elamites in their opposition to the Babylonians, this oracle was possibly written against the Elamites in order to dispel the exiles' hopes that the Elamites might overthrow the Babylo-

nians. We have no historical information concerning the destruction of the Elamites. We are simply told in this prophecy that they would have no chance against the enemy that God would bring against them. Their famous archers would not be able to defend them (Is 22:6). ***Latter days:*** Since we do not have any evidence of the restoration of the Elamite kingdom, we could assume that reference here was to the latter days of national Israel when the Messiah would call all men from their captivity into the kingdom of God (Compare comments Is 2:1-4).

Chapter 50
JUDGMENT AGAINST BABYLON

The material of chapters 50 & 51 is focused on the condemnation of Babylon and encouragement of Israel. Each reference to the doom of Babylon is almost always followed by a message of blessing to God's people. The prophecy is in the past tense, and thus in her infancy as a nation, Babylon is portrayed as overthrown.

50:1-3 Since Babylon manifested her arrogance among the nations, then the news of her condemnation would go forth to the nations. Her enemy out of the north, a coalition between the Medes and Persians, would overthrow her. ***Bel ... Marduk:*** The god of the Chaldeans (Bel) was eventually identified with the god of the Babylonians (Marduk). When the kingdom fell, the national god also fell.

50:4-10 The captives are encouraged by the announcement of the fall of Babylon. The fall would be so great that Babylon's demise would be used in apocalyptic literature to symbolize God's overthrow of kingdoms that men thought would never be overthrown (See comments Rv 14:8). ***Israel ... Judah:*** A remnant of all the tribes of Israel would be restored to their homeland in Palestine. God never intended to bring all Israelites back to Palestine. He promised that only a representative remnant of all twelve tribes be restored to the land in order to reestablish the identity of Israel as a nation (See comments Er & Ne). Once the identity was reestablished, then it would be known that all prophecies concerning the Messiah would be fulfilled when the fullness of time came (Gl 4:4). ***Perpetual covenant:*** The exiles would set their faces toward Jerusalem and renew the covenant that they had broken with the Lord. Their former leaders (shepherds) who would have died by the time of the return, had led them away from the Lord by their apostasy to idol religiosity. It was they who had sinned against the Lord. The Assyrians and Babylonians who devoured them claimed innocence. However, they did not give credit to God for their victories over God's people. They claimed the conquests for themselves. Through the prophets of Israel and Judah, they could have known that God was working through them, but they refused to give God credit for using them to chastise His people. ***Flee away from the midst of Babylon:*** The people of God are encouraged to flee from Babylon as refugees. God would bring judgment upon her, and thus she was coming to an end. As she had destroyed the nationhood of others, so she would be likewise destroyed never to exist again.

50:11-16 The condemnation of Babylon in the text continues by depicting the fall of the city. She proclaimed herself to be first among the nations, now she would be the last, and thus be left desolate. Since she rejoiced over the fall of Judah, others will be astonished over her fall. God calls on the nations to attack, for Babylon was guilty of attacking the people of God. Though she was the proxy instrument of God to judge Judah, she arrogantly claimed the victory for herself. ***Everyone will flee:*** When the Medo-Persians took over the territory of the conquered Babylonian Empire, she allowed the former captives to return to their homelands that were within the territory of the Medo-Persian Empire.

50:17-20 ***Assyria ... Babylon:*** The Assyrians took the northern kingdom into captivity in 722/21 B.C. Babylon took the remainder of the Israelites into captivity in 586 B.C. Israelites were thus scattered throughout the territories of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. God would later use this scattering of His people for world evangelism that would come in the 1st century (See comments Is 2:1-4). ***I will pardon:*** Those who afflicted Israel would be punished, but Israel would be pardoned and restored to her homeland.

50:21-27 The context returns to judgment upon Babylon. ***Merathaim:*** Or, "double rebellion." ***Pekod:*** Or, "punishment." These symbolic names for Babylon portray her sin. She was the hammer that broke the nations. She is now broken and shattered. God opened the armory of His weapons that He uses against the nations. He unleashed His weapons upon the nation that had tormented and destroyed so many other nations. Babylon was a warrior nation, and thus God was a strong warrior against her. As Babylon had snared other nations, so she was snared. The city of Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians with very little struggle. The Babylonian Empire capitulated without any major battle, though she had been built as a result of victories in great battles.

50:28 ***Vengeance:*** Babylon's destruction of the temple was to the Babylonians a sign that they had overcome the God of the Jews. Thus judgment on Babylon was God's vengeance on them for thinking that they had defeated the God of the Jews. Those in Jerusalem, therefore, would rejoice when the announcement would be made that Babylon had fallen.

50:29-32 Babylon was to be rewarded for her work. As she had done to others, so it would be done to her. As she took other nations out of existence, so she would be taken out of existence. As she was proud and arrogant against others, other nations were called to humble her.

50:33,34 Israel is encouraged by her deliverance. ***Redeemer:*** Israel was in bondage from which she could not deliver herself. Only God could work among the nations in order to release her from her captivity. Through God's grace, therefore, Israel was released from bondage and brought back to her homeland. However, it took the destruction of her captors in order to accomplish the freedom of His people. And so it has happened in reference to the Christian's deliverance from the kingdom of Satan (See comments Ep 4:7-10).

50:35-40 ***A sword:*** As the Babylonians had used the sword to amass their empire, so the sword will devour the nation. All the leaders, princes and priests alike, would suffer from the strike of the sword. ***Mixed people:*** Those mercenaries who were in allegiance with the Babylonians, would forsake their

commitment and allow the empire to fall. Though their soldiers were fierce against those they conquered, they would become feeble as women. She would be plundered of her riches and made ashamed of her idols, which idol gods would not deliver her in her day of calamity. ***Sodom and Gomorrah:*** As the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah ceased to exist, so would the Babylonian Empire. People continue to exist who make up empires, but the government, kings and princes, cease, no longer to rise again. Since many of the ancient empires were based on the leadership of a predominant king, and his son or sons who reigned after him, when the dynasty was terminated, the empire ceased to exist. So it would be with the Babylonian Empire. The people of the empire would continue under the control of a new empire.

50:41-46 ***Many kings:*** A coalition between the Medes and Persians took over the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. ***No mercy:*** As Babylon had shown no mercy to the nations she conquered, no mercy would be shown to her. ***King of Babylon:*** See Daniel 5 where Belshazzar was given a sign of his doom. ***Outcry is heard among the nations:*** The fall of the Babylonian Empire caused great joy among all the nations who had succumbed to her might. All those exiles who had been taken from their homelands rejoiced over the empire that had decimated their homelands. There was no remorse over the fall of the Babylonian Empire.

Chapter 51

51:1-10 ***Winnow:*** As a wind separates the chaff from the wheat, the enemy of Babylon would blow her away as chaff. The archers of the enemy would shoot their arrows through the strongest armor of the Babylonians. She is to be utterly destroyed because of her sin against God's people. ***Not been forsaken:*** These prophecies of the doom of Babylon were made many years before Babylon fell. When the prophecies were fulfilled, Israel would know that God had not forsaken His people. ***Flee:*** If one would save his life, then he must flee from Babylon. Since she is beyond healing, as was Israel and Judah in their days of apostasy, then there would be no healing. ***Revealed our righteousness:*** The destruction of Babylon was the vindication of God's people.

51:11-14 ***The Medes:*** The wind that would blow through Babylon is mentioned here in writing over seventy years before the Medo-Persians conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. We can be sure that the captive Jews were watching with anticipation the affairs of the international community in the years immediately before the completion of the seventy years of captivity. We would assume, therefore, that when Cyrus led the Medo-Persian coalition into the city of Babylon, that he had the support of the Jewish community that was scattered throughout the former Assyrian and Babylonian territories to which they had been taken captive. It may have been because of this support that Cyrus was generous in commissioning the Jews' return to their homeland in 536 B.C.

51:15-19 Since it is reasonable to conclude that God is the creator of all things, then idolatry, which is the manifestation of the spiritual inventions of man, is insane. God has revealed Himself to those He created (Rm 1:20). It is foolish, therefore, to ignore the evidence of God in the created world in order to follow after something that has been created after the imagination of men. For this reason, the invention of idols is a disgrace to the thinking of men. Idols are the result of men who seek to deceive themselves by believing their own lies.

51:20-23 ***You are My battle ax:*** God used the Babylonians to punish Judah, as He used the Assyrians to punish Israel. But each nation, though used by God, did not give credit to God for their existence or accomplishments. They were pagan nations who simply sowed havoc among God's people, submitting them to slavery throughout their empires. For this reason, they would reap what they had sown. The consequence of their maltreatment of God's people would be their annihilation from existence. These two empires would never exist again in history.

51:24-26 Nebuchadnezzar had exalted the Babylonian Empire as a mountain over the nations. But in her punishment by God, she would be leveled as the flat plain on which the city was originally built.

51:27-33 The combined nations of the Medes and Persians would strike the Babylonians. The Medes possibly took the leadership in assembling a coalition of people from surrounding nations. What is portrayed in this prophecy, and what possibly happened, was that the city of Babylon fell without a battle. The Babylonian soldiers are pictured as staying in the barracks, and thus they made no effort to ward off the offensive of the Medes and Persians. Babylon fell without a major battle being fought.

51:34-40 ***The violence done to me ... upon Babylon:*** Though Nebuchadnezzar had committed atrocities against Israel, those who ruled the Babylonian Empire after his death would pay the price. The reason for the destruction of the empire, therefore, was because of Nebuchadnezzar's maltreatment of the people of God during his reign. ***Take vengeance:*** God's work through the Medo-Persians to bring down the Babylonian Empire was an act of vengeance. Since God's people were helpless in delivering themselves, God came to their rescue. ***Make her springs dry:*** The figure here is evidently taken from the hanging gardens of Babylon. Water was also channeled into the city where it was made into waterfalls, and thus cooled houses. When the waters were dried up, the people sweltered in the extreme heat of the region.

51:41-44 ***Sheshach:*** Some believe that this was a code word for Babylon. ***Feast:*** Reference could possibly be to Belshazzar's feast in Daniel 5. ***Astonishment:*** No one thought that Babylon would fall. She was so powerful because of her warrior culture that there was no nation who could defeat her. Nevertheless, the one true God punished the false god Bel. Babylon would no longer be the power to which the nations of the Near East would submit.

51:45-51 If one would save his life, then he must flee out of the city of Babylon, for it would fall. Though written over seventy years before the fall of Babylon, God had already made the judgment that the city fall. Before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, God in His foreknowledge had already consigned the fall of Babylon. And when she did eventually

fall, all who were affected by Babylon on earth were joined with angelic beings in singing for joy over her fall (Compare comments Rv 14). ***You who have escaped:*** They must never forget that Jerusalem and the temple were desecrated by those who were unbelievers. They must never forget the shame that was brought upon God by the destruction of those things in Judah that represented the presence of God.

51:52-58 Though Babylon had fortified herself against the strongest attacks, those who would plunder the city had arrived. No fortification would stand against God's decree that the city fall. The attackers would be like a surging wave that cannot be stopped. It was a time of God's retribution upon those who had persecuted His people. Babylon's fall, therefore, was repayment for what Babylon had done to others. ***Drunk:*** The leaders of Babylon were disoriented as a drunk, and thus could not organize the forces of the nation against the attackers.

51:59-64 Since Zedekiah made a visit to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign, the year would be 594 B.C. Though Jeremiah had formerly prophesied that Babylon would destroy Jerusalem and take God's people into captivity, his prophecy of these words foretell the fall of Babylon. Jeremiah wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know that Babylon would not escape the vengeance of God for what he was about to do to Jerusalem in 586 B.C. ***Seraiah:*** He was possibly the brother of Baruch who accompanied Zedekiah on his trip to Babylon. ***Read all these words:*** The sending and reading of the scroll would bring comfort to those who were already in captivity. It would give them a message of expectation. They would be looking for the time when Babylon would fall. When the city eventually fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C., the captives knew what it meant. They knew that it was time to return to their homeland. ***Cast it into the middle of the Euphrates:*** When the Babylonian Empire fell to the Medes and Persians, it never resurfaced again as a nation in the history of mankind. It was simply one of those empires of yesteryear that passed through time for God's use in disciplining His people. We know of the Babylon Empire today only because of the historical mention of it in the Bible and archaeological discoveries that confirm its past existence.

Chapter 52
HISTORICAL PRONOUNCEMENTS

52:1-3 ***Zedekiah:*** See 2 Kg 24:18-20. Zedekiah lived after the wickedness of Jehoiakim, who was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. The moral leadership of Judah at the end of its existence was so digressed away from the moral standards of God, that the people had no example of morals before them to follow. When the leaders of any nation are morally degraded, the people of the nation follow.

52:4-7 ***Jerusalem ... was besieged:*** See 2 Kg 25:1-5. The wicked leadership of the kings of Judah was one thing that led to the destruction of Jerusalem and captivity of the people. At the end of a 30-month siege, the city of Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians on July 18, 586 B.C. The biblical records of this event are found in this text, the Kings and Chronicles, and Ezekiel. Secular records of the fall can be found in the Lachish Letters, the Babylonian Chronicle, and inscriptions in Egypt.

52:8-11 See 2 Kg 6 & 7. Zedekiah cowardly fled from the scene, realizing that the prophecy of Jeremiah of his captivity was going to take place. His flight from the people manifested his character and attitude in reference to being a leader for the people. He was a coward who thought only of himself. When morally degraded leaders assume to be leaders of a country, they often forget that their leadership role includes moral leadership, as well as leadership in government. The private life of good leaders is never something known only to themselves. Good leaders lead by the example of their lives.

52:12-16 See 2 Kg 25:8-12. Since Jerusalem had suffered through earlier captivities, and yet was left standing, we would assume that the original plan of Nebuchadnezzar was not to destroy the city or the temple. But because of the defiance of Zedekiah and those he led, in this final conquest of the city he commissioned Nebuzaradan to level the city as punishment to the Jewish nation. Such was in fulfillment of prophecy, for God wanted Israel completely humbled. He wanted Israel as an independent nation to end. He wanted the centralization of their faith and government through earthly kings to come to a close. The same end of Israel would come in about five hundred years from this date. When Jesus came, God again wanted to signal the end of Israel through the destruction of Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24). When Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, God brought Israel to a final ending, never to restore the nation again as part of His work.

52:17-23 See 2 Kg 25:13-17. Nothing is said of the ark of the covenant. If it still existed at this time it would surely have been taken to Babylon. Some historians believe that it was taken to Egypt in an earlier raid on Jerusalem during the first part of the reign of Rehoboam. The description of some of the temple structures that was given here by Jeremiah was possibly for the benefit of those who would after the captivity rebuild the temple. When the returnees came again to Jerusalem during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, they rebuilt the temple. However, the temple they built was not of the grandeur of the temple that had been built by Solomon and was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

52:24-27 See 2 Kg 25:13-17 (See Jr 29:11 – 43:7). ***Riblah:*** This was possibly the city where Nebuchadnezzar set up his command center during the raid of the cities of Palestine. From this location, he sent out his army under the leadership of his commanders. It was thus from this city that the captives were assembled in order to be marched off to Babylon.

52:28-30 The number of captives that are listed here are found nowhere else in the Bible. The deportation of 3,023 captives in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign is recorded in 2 Kings 24:12-14, but there it is recorded that he took 10,000 captives. Jeremiah's account is a record of only the fighting men, whereas the account in 2 Kings is a record of men, women and children. ***Seventh year:*** The beginning of the reign of kings was carried out in two different ways. Here, the system of registering the beginning of the reign of a king was to date his reign from the beginning of the first year when he ascended to the throne. In the 2 Kings account, the

system was used to allow one year to pass before counting the beginning of the king's reign at the end of the first year of reign. He had thus actually been on the throne for one year. ***Eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar:*** This would be a conquest of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. ***Twenty-third year:*** There is no mention of this deportation in the Scriptures. However, the Jewish historian Josephus in the first century A.D. mentions that Nebuchadnezzar campaigned in Egypt in the twenty-third year of his reign, where he captured and took Jews into captivity. These may have been the Jews who fled there after the rebellion of Gedaliah.

52:31-34 ***Evil-merodach:*** This king succeeded Nebuchadnezzar II. He was a lawless king. He was killed by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, having reigned a little over one year from 562-560 B.C. ***Above the throne of the kings who were with him:*** It may have been that Nebuchadnezzar took a king alive to Babylon as a prize and symbol of his conquest of each nation he conquered. Among those kings was Jehoiachin, whom he exalted in captivity and gave a daily ration of food. Jehoiachin was taken into captivity when he was only eighteen years old, and thus he grew up in captivity (2 Kg 24:8-15). He was taken in the 597 B.C. captivity. He humbled himself before his captors, and thus gained their respect. He was thus recognized as royalty in captivity, and given a place of honor at the king's table. Archaeologists discovered several years ago over 300 clay tablets that contain the administrative records of the Babylonian Empire. Jehoiachin is mentioned on four of these tablets. These tablets date from 595 to 570 B.C. The four tablets mention food rations that were given to Jehoiachin and his entourage. Jehoiachin is named as the "king of the land of Judah." The tablets also mention rations that were given to the sons of Jehoiachin.

Lamentations

WRITER

There is no identity of the writer of this book. It has been traditionally believed that the writer was Jeremiah who was an eyewitness to the calamity that befell Jerusalem. He wrote these words as a lament over the fall of the city and the termination of national Israel as an independent nation. There are many similarities between this book and the book of Jeremiah. The Septuagint, as well as the ancient Syriac, Arabic and Vulgate translations, attribute the authorship of the book to Jeremiah. There is no conclusive evidence that he was not the author.

Those who question the authorship of Jeremiah point out that the acrostic literary style of the five poems, and the presence of new terms and phrases that are not common in the book of Jeremiah, suggest another writer. However, the many similarities between the two books seem to outweigh any justified denial of Jeremiah's authorship (Compare Jr 7:21 with Lm 1:15 and Jr 9:1,18 with Lm 1:6). Jeremiah's emotional temperament and sensitive nature that are evident in both books are strong arguments for the traditional view that Jeremiah was indeed the writer.

The statement in 2 Chronicles 35:25 should not be used as evidence that Jeremiah wrote the book. The 2 Chronicles statement was a reference to writing a lamentation after the death of King Josiah. However, other than identifying Jeremiah with the writing of lamentation literature, the death of Josiah took place many years before the setting of the writing of the lamentations of this book over a fallen Jerusalem.

DATE

The lamentations that the writer pours out over Jerusalem indicate that he personally experienced the calamity of the fall of Jerusalem and the hardships of the residents of the land and the captives that immediately followed. Since the destruction of Jerusalem took place in 586 B.C., most Bible students date the book to have been written shortly after the arrival of the captives to Babylon.

BOOK

This is a book of five poems, with the fifth being in the form of a prayer. In the Hebrew text, the first four poems are alphabetic acrostics of the Hebrew alphabet. It is difficult to determine why the writer used an acrostic style of writing, other than the fact that such a style of writing may have been for the purpose of aiding memorization of the book.

The first four poems are dirges over the devastation of the land, Jerusalem and the people. They were possibly written as such to be recited by the people in expressing their sorrow over the fall of Jerusalem, which fall symbolized the termination of Israel as a free and independent nation. The meaning that is expressed in the poems is repentance, and a confession of Israel's sin of apostasy. In their confession, they understood that God was just in overthrowing Jerusalem. The dirges were written, therefore, for the purpose of motivating the first generation of captives to confess their sins in order to change their culture of rebellion on behalf of their children and grandchildren. In order for a new generation of Jews to be born into the world and grow up obedient to God, their fathers had to confess to their apostasy from God. In doing so, they could train up their children by example to once again be the people of God.

Song Of A Mourning City
(1:1-22)

Outline: (1) Desolation of the city (1:1-7), (2) Sin of the city (1:8-11), (3) Pleas of the city (1:12-17), (4) Prayer of the city (1:18-22)

Chapter 1

DESOLATION OF THE CITY

1:1-7 Jerusalem is here personified as a woman from whom her husband and children have been taken. She is a widow who mourns. In view of her origins, the question is how this could have happened. The greatness of her past history emphasized the extent of her mourning in loneliness. ***Her lovers:*** These were those with whom Jerusalem had made political alliances. She was betrayed by those who were supposed to help her. ***No one to comfort her:*** In the day of her calamity, none of the nations with whom she had made alliances were able to aid her. ***Roads to Zion:*** No one went to the feasts in Jerusalem, for the city was destroyed. The feasts had stopped, and the priests sighed for lack of those to whom they could minister in the sacrifices. The people had become slaves to their Babylonian masters. The masters thus prospered because of the great number of Jews they had taken for slaves. ***The Lord has afflicted her:*** Her misery was the result of the judgment of God upon her sins. ***Daughter of Zion:*** Throughout the book this would be a personification of Jerusalem, the offspring of the people of Israel. ***Princes:*** There was no more strength in the leadership of Israel. While in the misery of captivity, the people remembered the good old days when they enjoyed pleasant things. They cried out, therefore, because they realized that they had lost all as a result of their transgressions.

SIN OF THE CITY

1:8-11 ***Grievously sinned:*** Her sin was grievous because it became the culture by which she lived. She became inwardly perverse. She thus became unclean as a menstruate woman. She had digressed to an evil heart of wickedness. ***Seen her nakedness:*** Her wicked character became known to all, and thus all turned from her. The people lived for the present. Because they followed after the ways of a perverse culture, they did not remember where God said they would end up if they turned from Him. ***Her pleasant things:*** Her conquerors entered the temple and took all the bronze utensils and carried them away to Babylon. ***Given their treasures:*** The people gave over the city in order to survive the calamity of the city.

PLEAS OF THE CITY

1:12-17 The personification of a forsaken and desolate Jerusalem continues in these verses. ***All you who pass by:*** A desperate cry from Judah is made to all. The city begs for compassion. There is a confession in these words. She confesses that her calamity led to her Divine punishment. Nevertheless, she cried out from a heart of sorrow over her past transgressions. ***Fire into my bones:*** God's chastisement had subdued the inhabitants. ***They are woven:*** Her sins were woven into a yoke that was laid upon her neck. The young men either died in war, or had been taken into captivity. There was thus no relief from the grief that the people were suffering. The people were choked with tears and no one came to comfort them. ***Menstruate woman:*** The people are shunned as an unclean woman during her menstruate time.

PRAYER OF THE CITY

1:18-22 ***I have rebelled:*** The road to repentance and restitution begins with admission of one's own sin. ***Hear:*** Jerusalem wanted others to learn from her example of rebellion. She wanted the world to understand that rebellion against the commandments of God would cause one to reap the consequences of God's judgment. ***My lovers:*** The nations in which the Israelites trusted for deliverance, forsook her. As Egypt, they too were punished for working against God's plan to discipline His people for their rebellion. ***Priests ... elders:*** When the calamity came, the character of the religious and civic leaders was manifested as they selfishly sought for their own survival. ***My spirit is greatly troubled:*** By the admission of guilt, the people resigned themselves to the punishment of God. In doing this, they understood that where they went in apostasy they must never go again. In their admission of guilt, they cried out for vindication. ***Do to them:*** God had formerly spoken through the prophets that He would bring calamity on those who afflicted His people. Though God worked through Assyria and Babylonia in order to discipline His people, the nations arrogantly carried out their work to destroy Israel completely. Their arrogance became the foundation upon which God rendered to them just judgment. The surrounding nations who rejoiced in the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem would suffer the same because of their rejoicing over the calamity of God's people.

Song Of A Broken People
(2:1-22)

Outline: (1) Destroyer of the people (2:1-10), (2) Anguish of the people (2:11-17), (3) Pleas of the people (2:20-22)

Chapter 2

This second poem expands the thoughts of the previous poem. It is a general lamentation of all the people of Israel, but particularly those of Judah and Jerusalem. The people recognized their apostasy, and thus accepted their national calamity as God's punishment for their apostasy.

DESTROYER OF THE PEOPLE

2:1-10 ***Jacob ... Judah:*** God is identified as the One who has worked against Jacob (Israel) and Judah in the time of their apostasy. He was the one who poured out judgment upon the people. ***His anger:*** Because they had rebelled against the will of God, they fell into the hands of God, and thus experienced His wrath (Hb 10:31). ***Cloud:*** They were overwhelmed with calamity. ***The beauty of Israel:*** The temple was torn down by the Babylonians. This religious symbol in which they had so much pride was taken away. ***His footstool:*** The mercy seat of the temple was destroyed. ***Horn of Israel:*** God brought the strength of Israel to a close. All the strength of the nation that was symbolized by structures and rulers in

Jerusalem was brought to an end. National Israel as a glorious independent state was brought to a close. Nothing remained to identify her as a nation among the nations of the world. The destruction was total. ***Taken away His tabernacle:*** The glorious temple of stone and glamour was swept away as if it were a gardener's booth made of branches and leaves. ***King and priest:*** The civil head of state and the religious leaders were terminated. The identity of the nation through these figures was taken away, and thus Israel could no longer be identified as an independent state.

ANGUISH OF THE PEOPLE

2:11-17 ***My ... tears:*** The devastation and termination of the Israelite state brought grief to the prophet (See Jr 9:1; 14:17). As an Israelite, Jeremiah was loyal to Israel for he understood that the Israelites were the people of God. Seeing and experiencing the termination of Israel as an independent state, brought great sorrow in his heart. One must imagine the termination of his own country as if it had been in existence for almost one thousand years, and then came to an end in a matter of months. The extreme anguish that Jeremiah and the captives experienced would have certainly been unbearable. The nature of the message of Lamentations must be understood in view of the fact that a nation that existed for one thousand years had come to an end. ***To what will I compare you:*** No other nation that had existed as long as Israel was brought to such a climatic conclusion in such a short time. ***Your prophets:*** The false prophets to which the people listened had given them false hopes of an early restoration. ***Not discovered your iniquity:*** Instead of preaching against the sin of the people, the false prophets condoned their wicked behavior. By doing such, they actually sealed the fate of the nation. ***Misleading oracles:*** The false prophets preached what the people wanted to hear, and what the people wanted to hear was confirmation of their idolatrous behavior. The false prophets, therefore, must take responsibility for the fall of the nation (See Jr 14:14-16; 23:9-40). Those preachers who will not take a stand for what the word of God says, are allowing the people to turn away from God. Though His people are not destroyed in time as Israel, apostates will be destroyed at the end of time (2 Th 2:6-9). ***Opened their mouth against you:*** Israel became arrogant in claiming to be a special nation that had been created by God. She announced this to all other nations, assuming that God had rejected other nations when He chose her. But now that she was taken out of existence, the other nations mocked the Israelites for their arrogance. They mocked the "national god" whom Israel claimed would never allow her to go out of existence as a nation. Her termination, therefore, became an occasion for other nations to mock the God of Israel, saying that He was no different than their own nationalistic gods. ***He has fulfilled His word:*** God was good for His word. When He gave Israel the law at Mount Sinai, He told Israel that if they forsook His commandments, He would forsake them, and then bring them to destruction (Lv 26:16; Dt 28). The point was that with great privilege there comes great responsibility. Israel had the privilege of being a chosen people, and thus protected from the hostility of the nations by God's protective care. They were thus known among the nations as a chosen people. However, when they forsook the One who created them as a nation, they had to be terminated, for in the termination the nations had to see that God would not allow the apostasy of His chosen people to another god.

PLEAS OF THE PEOPLE

2:18,19 Jeremiah expressed a prayer for the people in these two verses. ***Wall:*** The walls of the cities metaphorically stood for the people. In this prayer, the people cried out to God for deliverance.

2:20-22 Jeremiah expressed the feelings of the people. They asked for God to reconsider them. They asked for a second chance. In doing so, the prophet rehearsed some of the terrible things that transpired during the destruction of Jerusalem. Their hope was in the fact that the God of mercy could not be indifferent concerning their plight.

The Weeping Prophet
(3:1-66)

Outline: (1) Lament from desperation (3:1-18), (2) Confession of faith (3:19-39), (3) Call for repentance (3:40-47), (4) Intercession (3:48-54), (5) Appeal for help (3:55-66)

Chapter 3
LAMENT FROM DESPERATION

The background of this poem rested on the events of Jeremiah's life that are expressed in Jeremiah 20 & 38. Except for verses 40-47, this poem expresses the feelings of an individual. The individual, Jeremiah, expressed his emotions for the people. The problems of the people found their expression in the problems and inner turmoil of Jeremiah.

3:1-18 Each individual was an expression of the suffering of the nation. As the nation, Jeremiah bore the burden of the calamity, and thus the griefs of all the people. God had turned the brightness of life into a dim and hopeless future. They suffered from a national depression. And because the future was so dark, it was as if he were dead. In reality, the nation was dead. It was dead as an independent nation residing in a specific land. In God's chastisement of the nation, all joy was taken from the people. Because they had been fenced in by captivity, they had lost their freedom. The Babylonians sought to destroy their national identity by making them bow down to Babylonian gods. The Israelites cried out in captivity, but they would not regain their freedom until they had accomplished the seventy years of captivity. Their cries for freedom within the designated time of captivity, therefore, were not answered. In their predicament of captivity, God remained against them as a fierce bear or lion. As Jeremiah during his ministry was taunted by the people, now the nations taunted the captives. They were reaping what they had sown. ***Wormwood:*** This was a bitter substance as gall. ***Forgot happiness:*** As the years of captivity would progress, the people would forget what it was like when they lived in prosperity in the land of milk and honey. Only their children and grandchildren would have a chance to return to the land (See comments Er & Ne). All those who were taken into captivity would die in captivity.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

3:19-39 In the previous statements, the prophet poured out his heart in grief. And now, he waited for a response from God. He thus prayed that God remember his affliction and the affliction of the entire nation. The people had been humbled because of the apostasy and humiliated because of captivity and the loss of their national identity. But in his state of humiliation, Jeremiah remembered that God does not despise the broken. He remembered that God is compassionate, and thus he found hope in the fact that a compassionate God would not leave him and the nation in a state of destitution. ***Great is Your faithfulness:*** God is faithful to the broken because He is compassionate. ***My portion:*** God is the fullness of all our desires. And because He is such, only in Him is there hope. One discovers the faithfulness of God through obedience to His will. ***Yoke of his youth:*** When disciplined as a youth, one disciplines himself when an adult. Israel would thus remember the discipline of God in her youth in order to restore the same for herself as an adult. Only in this would she be saved from the result of her apostasy. ***He gives his cheek:*** They would be blessed if they endured the humiliation of captivity. Their abasement would eventually lead to a restoration of their freedom. Therefore, they must endure hardship in order to be molded after the character of their Creator (Compare Is 50:6; Mt 5:36). ***Not reject forever:*** When the molding of the character of the people was complete, then restoration would occur. They must, therefore, see the work of God in their suffering. God allows suffering to come in order to mold our character for eternal dwelling. For this reason, we must not despise the chastisement of the Lord. ***He does not afflict willingly:*** God is not mean. He has eternity in view. His chastisement is for the purpose of restoring us to His ways, and thus mold us for eternal dwelling with Him. For this reason, we count it with all joy when we fall into different trials (Js 1:1,2). The grief into which He allowed His children to go, caused Him grief. When Israel left God, they placed themselves in the realm of Satan's work. It was Satan who ravaged the nation. God only allowed Satan to have his way with His people. God is not fiendish. He allows us to live in an environment wherein Satan goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pt 5:8). But Satan is a bound lion (Rv 21:1-6).

CALL FOR REPENTANCE

3:40-47 In this section the writer placed himself with the people, and thus used the third person pronoun. ***Examine our ways:*** Before there can be repentance, admission of one's sin must take place. ***We have transgressed:*** After admission of sin, comes confession. Israel could not find her way back to God unless she realized that she had strayed from His commandments. One of the reasons why the nation was destroyed was because the people did not know that they had strayed from God. They could not repent because they did not realize that they had sinned. ***You have slain:*** God did what He promised. He brought destruction on the people because they broke their covenant relationship with Him. In their apostasy, they transgressed the conditions of the covenant. ***Cloud:*** Because they went into apostasy, and did not live according to His law, He would not hear their prayers. Prayer is answered only when one prays according to the will of God (Ps 66:18; see comments 1 Jn 5:14).

INTERCESSION

3:48-54 ***Destruction of the daughter:*** Jeremiah cried out to God because of his remorse over the moral apostasy of the people, and the destruction that resulted from God's chastisement of the people. ***Until the Lord looks down:*** He would plead without ceasing until the Lord took notice of the plight of His people (Compare Mt 15:21-28; 1 Th 5:17). He would pray until there was an answer. ***The dungeon:*** Jeremiah recalled his own experience in the cistern when he was rejected by the people (Jr 38:6-13). Now the entire nation was in the pit of captivity, and thus needed to pray for deliverance.

APPEAL FOR HELP

3:55-66 Jeremiah recalled the time when God answered his prayer for deliverance from the cistern into which the people had earlier cast him. And now, he prays that God will remember His people in the pit of captivity. ***Repay them:*** Those who cast Jeremiah in the cistern were gone. They had failed to heed his warning that unless they gave themselves over to the Babylonians, they would die by the sword. They did not surrender, and subsequently, they died. At the time of writing, Jeremiah sees God's people as cast into the dungeon of captivity. He called on God to render to the captors the same judgment that He had rendered to those who had personally cast him into the dungeon before the fall of Jerusalem.

The Desolate Kingdom
(4:1-22)

Outline: (1) Consequences of sin (4:1-12), (2) Power of sin (4:13-16), (3) Vanity of the past (4:17-20), (4) Condemnation of Edom (4:21,22)

Chapter 4
CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

This chapter is a poem of contrasts between the former state of Jerusalem and what was left after the destruction of the city by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The description that is given here of the society prior to the destruction manifests the depths to which the people went in moral degradation.

4:1-12 ***Dim:*** The once brilliant city was changed to a place of devastation. The description of the change in the moral fiber of the society is here presented as a dirge. Jerusalem was once a glorious product of the people, but at the time of writing it was in ashes. The ashes of the temple were scattered throughout the streets of the city. A generation of youth lie dead in the streets. Like broken pitchers of the potter, they lie dead, and thus the people to whom this prophecy was addressed no longer had a future in the land. During the 30-month siege against the city by the Babylonians, conditions became so bad in the city that mothers ate their children. They became like violent monsters who turned against their own children. Ostriches were noted for their neglect of their off-

spring, and thus the mothers of the besieged city became the same in reference to their children (Jb 39:13-17). ***Embrace ash heaps:*** Conditions in the besieged city became so bad that the inhabitants dug through the city dumps looking for food. ***Sodom:*** The fate of the people was worse than Sodom, for Sodom was destroyed in a moment. The pitiful condition of the inhabitants of Jerusalem went on for months during the siege of the city. ***Her princes:*** The rulers who once paraded themselves before the people in fine garments were now either dead or paraded off to Babylon in the rags of a captive. Though their bodies were once fat from the lavish living style they had enjoyed, they were now skin and bones.

POWER OF SIN

4:13-16 ***Because of the sins of her prophets ... priests:*** The destruction of national Israel as an independent state was the result of the religious leaders of the people. The same would happen again in history in A.D. 70 with another destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (See comments Mt 24). Because of their ignorance of the word of God, the erroneous falsehoods they preached, and their immoral behavior of their lives, the religious leadership brought the nation to a close (See comments Hs 4:6). ***Shed blood:*** The religious leaders were guilty of murder in the sense that the faithful people within the besieged city had to pay the price of death because they were victims of a leadership who held the people in bondage. ***People do not respect the priests ... elders:*** Once the end finally came, the people realized that their leaders led them in the wrong direction. They had preached peace when there was no peace (Jr 6:14). They did not preach against the sins of the people lest they lose their support from the people. They followed the road of popularity among the people instead of turning the people from the error of their ways. Both they and the people believed a lie, therefore, both were condemned for believing it (2 Th 2:9-12; see Jr 5:31; 6:13; 23:11-16).

VANITY OF THE PAST

4:17-20 ***Help was useless:*** Judah thought that the Egyptians would come to their aid (See Jr 7). However, the Babylonians turned from the siege of Jerusalem for a short time in order to defeat the Egyptians, sending them back to Egypt. Then in 582/81 B.C., the Babylonians ravaged the land of Egypt. ***Swifter than eagles:*** There was no place to which the Jews could go to escape the Babylonians. Zedekiah fled from the city, but the Babylonians caught him (Jr 39:4-7). A remnant of defiant Jews fled to Egypt after they assassinated Gedaliah, but the Babylonians went into Egypt and killed most of them.

CONDEMNATION OF EDOM

4:21,22 The Edomites were always antagonistic of Israel, though they were descendants of Abraham through Esau. However, Edom's arrogance against Israel finally brought her to national extinction. When Jerusalem was under attack from the Babylonians, Edom sided with the enemies of the Jews. She even went as far as to grab some of the land possessions of the Israelites (See Ez 35:10-12). ***Rejoice and be glad:*** This is an irony. ***The cup:*** This was the cup of judgment (Jr 25:15-28). Edom should rejoice while she could, for calamity was coming her way. She would fall in a drunken stupor. ***Punishment ... completed:*** In comparison to the future of Edom with Judah, Judah had a future, but Edom did not. Edom would be terminated as an existing nation among the nations of the world (Ob 18).

Appeal Of A Penitent People
(5:1-22)

Outline: (1) Appeal for mercy (5:1-6), (2) Disasters from sin (5:7-18), (3) Appeal to God (5:19-22)

Chapter 5
APPEAL FOR MERCY

This last poem is a prayer, though it is not written in the style of an alphabetic acrostic. In the prayer, the writer reflects on the past calamities of the people in order to make a plea God for compassion. The confessions of the sins of the past are a plea for the mercy of God.

5:1-6 ***Remember:*** This word is used as a plea to God. God does not forget. His children plea to Him to remember and to enact His promises to deliver them from their dire circumstances. In their captivity, the people were helpless as orphans and widows. They had to buy from their captors the basic things of life in order to exist. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the poorest of the land were left by the Babylonians. The picture here may be that these poor Israelites, who were left in the land, had to buy water and wood that was formerly theirs as a part of their ownership of the land. They were now strangers in their own land. They lived as forced slaves in their own land, as well as slaves in the land of their captors. ***Submitted to Egypt:*** They were humiliated to the point of having to buy from Egypt and Assyria in order not to starve.

DISASTERS FROM SIN

5:7-18 ***Fathers have sinned ... borne their iniquities:*** The fathers had gone into apostasy, and subsequently, the children had to bear the burden of captivity. The children reaped the consequences of their fathers' sins, not the guilt for their sin. For this reason, the children could enjoy the mercy of God, though the fathers had to die in captivity as slaves. ***Sword of the wilderness:*** The raiders of the desert endangered their lives when they wandered in scavenging for anything to eat. ***Skin is hot:*** They suffered from the fever of starvation. They were a remnant people left in a devastated land. They were the survivors of a national disaster that was the result of the sins of the fathers. They were morally despondent because there was no hope for the future. Jeremiah's plea, therefore, was that God show mercy.

APPEAL TO GOD

5:19-22 These words, though written by the prophet who knew that God had not forgotten them, voices the feelings of the people. In their despair, the people reach out to God for help. They had reached the lowest point of human survival, and thus were ready for a turn in international events that might bring favor upon them as a people. God was at the time

of their agony working among the nations in order to raise up the Medo-Persian Empire against the Babylonians. When this eventually happened within a generation from the time of this writing, the Jews would once again enjoy the relief that would come when their brothers would return from their captivity in the east to aid in the reconstruction of the land. They would discover that they were not utterly rejected by God. They would discover that God was still watching over His people.

Ezekiel

WRITER

There is no question that Ezekiel, the priest, was the writer of this book (1:3). The meaning of his name is, "God will strengthen." His father's name was Buzi (1:3). He was a priest who descended from Zadok, of the family of Eleazer, the son of Aaron (1:3; see 40:46). He was born in 622 B.C. during the time of King Josiah's reform. When he was twenty-five years old he was taken with the first captives and King Jehoiachin to Babylon in 597 B.C. This was the first Babylonian captivity when Nebuchadnezzar took 10,000 of the most prominent of the people to Babylon (2 Kg 24:14-16). His home in Babylonia was Telabib that was located by the River Chebar, about one hundred kilometers south of Babylon.

Ezekiel was called to be a spokesman for God at the age of thirty, the age at which priests assumed their duties. The Lord came to him through a great vision with a personal destiny that he had to fulfill (1:3 – 3:11). It was his mission to encourage the Israelites in captivity by helping them to understand that God was in control of all things. Their captivity was in the plan of God, and thus they should resign themselves to the fact that God would eventually restore them to their land if they repented of their idolatry. The children of the original captives did return to God, and thus they were allowed to go to the promised land.

Ezekiel was a married man, though he lost his wife in the 9th year of his captivity and the 4th year of his ministry (24:15-18). She died at the same time the Babylonians began their siege of the city of Jerusalem (24:1,15-18). Contemporary with Ezekiel was Daniel, who prophesied in the city of Babylon. While Daniel lived through the period of seventy years of captivity, Ezekiel probably died before 536 B.C., the date of the release of the captives.

DATE

King Josiah died in 609 B.C. at the hands of the Egyptians who were on their way to Carchemish to help the Assyrians defend themselves against the Babylonians. The Israelites selected Jehoahaz, Josiah's son to reign in his place (2 Kg 23:30). However, he reigned only three months before the Egyptians replaced him with Jehoiakim (2 Kg 23:34). Jehoiakim subsequently became a vassal to the Egyptians. But he died and Jehoiachin his son became king. In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, humbled Jerusalem. Jehoiachin reigned only a short time before he and 10,000 Israelites were taken into Babylonian captivity (2 Kg 24:8-16). Though he was taken into captivity, he was still honored as the king of Judah.

Zedekiah was then placed on the throne in Jerusalem, and subsequently became a vassal to the king of Babylon (2 Kg 24:17). Zedekiah eventually rebelled against the Babylonians, which rebellion led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Jeremiah was God's prophet in Jerusalem before and after the fall of the city. Ezekiel was in Babylon by the River Chebar. Daniel was in the city of Babylon. There were false prophets both in Jerusalem and in Babylon. The false prophets in Babylon were giving the people the false hope that they would in their lifetime return to Palestine (Jr 28:1-4). Before the fall of Jerusalem, they were preaching that the city would never fall (13:16,19). Before the fall of the city, therefore, both Ezekiel and Jeremiah were preaching to the people that God was carrying out His promise that they would go into captivity if they continued in their idolatry. The captives were thus to settle into their captivity until a new generation of Israelites grew up, knowing only the God of heaven (Jr 29:4-10). It was during these years of international turmoil that Ezekiel was called. His ministry extended from 592 to 570 B.C., during which time his oracles were transcribed in this book.

BOOK

When approaching a study of this book, in different contexts one must often reverse the normal procedure for biblical interpretation. The general rule for biblical interpretation is to understand a text literally, unless the context and style of writing suggests that we must interpret the text figuratively. But many contexts of this book must first be understood in a figurative sense. This is the most unique of all books of the Old Testament. Symbolism and metaphors run throughout the book in proverbs, parables, allegories and dramatically portrayed prophecies. Many contexts were written as apocalyptic literature with cryptic symbols (See intro. to Rv).

The reader must always remember that Ezekiel's message was directed to the Israelite captives. The oracles of the book were given in order to pronounce the end of Israel's independent state in Palestine, with hope for the future restoration, and eventually the Messianic age that would be introduced with the coming of the Messiah. Ezekiel carefully dates his material, and thus the book is systematic and the material orderly outlined according to the historical events through which the Israelites were going at the time.

The Call And Commission
(1:1 – 3:27)

Outline: (1) The call (1:1-28), (2) The commission (2:1 – 3:27)

Chapter 1
THE CALL

1:1-3 ***Thirtieth year:*** It is not known from which event this accounting of years was measured. It has been suggested that this was the thirtieth year of the life of Ezekiel when he was called to be a prophet. In this call, the ministry of Ezekiel as a priest was changed to that of a prophet. The reason for God calling him was to minister to those who were in captivity. It also had specific reference to his ministry among the people who were being given a false hope by false prophets of an immediate restoration to Palestine. The false prophets, who were among the captives, were proclaiming to the people that there would be a return to Palestine in the immediate future (See comments Jr 23 & 29). However, God's prophets were saying that there would be a captivity for seventy years. This meant that the generation to whom Ezekiel ministered would never return to the land. Only their children and grandchildren would return. In the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah had sent a letter to the captives explaining this (Jr 51:59). One year after Jeremiah sent the letter, God called Ezekiel. ***Visions:*** A vision was a mental picture of an event or action that was so real to the prophet who experienced it that he could not differentiate it from reality. ***Jehoiachin's captivity:*** This captivity took place in 597 B.C. ***River Chebar:*** This tributary to the Euphrates was located south of the capital, Babylon. This was the location of the ministry of Ezekiel (3:11,15,23; 10:15,20,22; 11:24,25). ***Hand of the Lord:*** See 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1. The hand of God was for comfort and direction with reference to the faithful. But for the unfaithful, it meant destruction. When God stretches forth His hand, it is good for the righteous, but bad for the unrighteous.

1:4-28 This vision pictured the work of God in bringing judgment upon the remainder of the Israelites through the proxy of the Babylonian army. Ezekiel saw a stormy wind, a wind of judgment. As the army of Assyria that God used to discipline the northern kingdom of Israel came from the north of Palestine, so came God's judgment by proxy through the Babylonians. Since Nebuchadnezzar's army had to follow the Fertile Crescent in order to circumnavigate the Arabian Desert to come into Palestine, they would thus need to approach Israel from the north. Six years from the time of this vision, God would send the Babylonians to Palestine. The presence of God was in the cloud that appeared. ***Four living creatures:*** The four arms, or possibly armies, of the Babylonian forces would be unleashed on Judah and Jerusalem. ***Wings:*** The forces of Nebuchadnezzar were sent by God, and thus could not be stopped by any earthly army. ***Joined one to another:*** This could represent the unity of the forces of Nebuchadnezzar, or a coalition of other armies that were fighting together with the Babylonians who were under the command of King Nebuchadnezzar. ***Straight forward:*** Nebuchadnezzar was resolute in his mission to destroy Jerusalem. ***Each had the face of a man:*** Though commissioned by God, the destroyers were armies of men. ***Lion:*** Power and terror. ***Ox:*** Unyielding strength. ***Eagle:*** Swiftness. ***The spirit:*** The army of Nebuchadnezzar was commissioned to be God's judgment by proxy upon the land of Palestine, and specifically, Jerusalem. ***Wheel:*** God was with the Babylonian army in order to accomplish His purpose in terminating Israel as an independent nation. The Lord was thus empowering the forces of Babylon to destroy Jerusalem. They could not be stopped. ***Eyes:*** The eyes of God were on the rims. He could see in all directions. ***Beryl:*** A deep green or blue green color. ***Firmament:*** Over the heads of the creatures was the arch of the sky. The throne, or authority of God, was over the marching Babylonian army as it carried out God's judgment on Jerusalem. ***Likeness ... of a man:*** This was the revelation of hope in the vision, possibly taking our minds beyond the national calamity of the time, to the ascension and reign of the Son of Man. ***Rainbow:*** The rainbow was given to humanity as a symbol of God's continual protection (Gn 9:13-17). After the calamity of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of Israel as an independent state, God would continue to protect His people, and thus continue their existence. ***Fell upon my face:*** When any man encounters the presence of God, even in such an awesome vision as this, the natural response would be the total submission of one self.

Chapter 2
THE COMMISSION

2:1-5 ***Son of man:*** There are eighty-six references in this book to Ezekiel as the "son of man" (See Nm 23:10; Jb 25:6). Reference to him as the son of man was meant to point out that Ezekiel was a man, with all the fallibility of a man without the Spirit of God who would direct him in his ministry as a prophet. The reference was also used by both David and Daniel in reference to the Christ (Ps 8:4; Dn 7:13). However, when used in reference by Jesus throughout His ministry, He designated Himself as the Son of Man. Ezekiel, David and Daniel were referred to as the son of God in order to emphasize the fact that their mission and ministry originated from God. ***I am sending you:*** Ezekiel was personally called by God and personally filled with the Spirit in order to deliver a designated message to the Jews in captivity. ***Rebellious nation:*** They were a hardheaded generation that would not humble themselves because of their calamity of captivity.

2:6-10 ***Do not be afraid:*** They had digressed so far away from God that anyone who came with a message from God was opposed, even to the point of threats of death. In some cases, God's prophets were killed by the ones to whom they were sent (Hb 11:32-40). ***Briers ... thorns ... scorpions:*** They were the offspring of their fathers who had rebelled against the will of God. They were a people who had digressed from prickly needles of briers, to hurtful thorns, and then to deadly scorpions. ***Whether they hear or ... refuse:*** The preaching of the word of God does not depend on whether people listen or refuse to listen. It was the work of the prophet to deliver God's word to the people, and in doing such, God would stand just for His condemnation of them. If the prophet failed to

speak what God had given him to say, he would have been rebellious. ***Roll of a scroll:*** The message that was written on both sides of the scroll was not good for the captives. There were lamentations over their predicament, mourning as a result of their plight, and woe if they did not repent and submit to the Lord. The call of God is that they turn to Him in submission to His will.

Chapter 3

3:1-3 Before Ezekiel could go to the people with the word of God, he had to consume it. Because it was sweetness in his mouth, he was motivated to tell others. When one is filled with the word of God, it becomes fire in his bones, and thus he is moved to preach the word. One's belief that the word is from God moves him out of necessity to preach it to others (See comments At 4:20).

3:4-11 ***Speak with My words:*** When one speaks for God, he must speak God's word, not his own feelings or imaginations (1 Pt 4:11). If one speaks from his own feelings or imagination, then he is leading the people by his emotional experiences, not the word of God. ***They would have hearkened:*** Ezekiel's commission was to all Israel, specifically to those of the captivity. The predicament in which they found themselves at this time in history was the result of their stubborn attitude against God's direction. Though the nations would have listened to what he had to say, the people of Israel would reject the word of his preaching. However, Ezekiel had to understand that the ministry of preaching was not dependent on people listening to the word of God. Prophets were sent to preach, regardless of the receptivity of the people. If the preaching of the word of God moves people to repent, then the people who repent because of the word have a sincere heart for God. When people stop being drawn by the preaching of the word of God, they digress to being drawn by the charismatic personalities of man (See comments 2 Tm 4:1-4). ***Your forehead strong:*** In order to accomplish his ministry, Ezekiel had to be an astringent personality. He was to preach what the people did not want to hear, but needed to hear. He sought to lead them where they did not want to go, but needed to go. Nevertheless, he had to preach and lead. Astringent leadership is not determined by the wishes of the people who often do not want to listen to the word of God. Good leaders are determined by their motivation by the word of God, not by the desires of the people (Compare comments At 20:32; Hb 4:12). When people refuse to hear the word of God, the preacher must become more determined than the people in delivering the word of God. A preacher must never be discouraged by those who have no desire to hear the word of God.

3:12-15 In order to emotionally prepare for his mission, Ezekiel had to take the traditional seven days to think through his calling and ministry (See Jb 2:13). We must keep in mind that he was a married man, and thus he may have wanted to consider also the stress that his mission would have on his family. He had a tremendous mission before him, and thus with great prayer and fasting, it was his destiny as a called prophet of God to go forth with the message of God (Compare comments 2 Tm 4:1-5).

3:16-21 This text reveals the personal accountability of all men in reference to their free-moral response to the word of God. ***Watchman:*** Ezekiel had been made a sentry over the people in order to guard them from lies and deceptions (See Is 56:10; Jr 6:17; Hk 2:1). As a watchman, he was given the responsibility to proclaim the word of God. ***Hear the word from My mouth:*** A watchman for God does not determine the state and direction of the people with his own word, but with the word of God (Jn 12:48; 1 Pt 4:11). Preachers who do not know the Bible seek to lead by their own charisma or ability to speak. God's leaders, on the other hand, know and obey His word, and thus communicate His word to the people. ***Die in his iniquity:*** If one knows the truth, but does not speak to others what he knows, then he will be held accountable for those to whom he did not preach the word of God. If the wicked are not warned, they will still die in their sins. They will die in their ignorance. The Bible nowhere teaches salvation by ignorance (See comments At 4:12; 2 Th 1:6-9). ***His blood:*** If the wicked person dies without warning, then the one who had the message that would have given him the opportunity not to die in his sin, would also be guilty. It was the responsibility of Ezekiel to warn the unrighteous. It was not his responsibility to save them. God's people are the medium through whom He seeks to warn all men. But God is the one who will render death to the disobedient. ***A righteous man turns from his righteousness:*** There is no such thing as once-saved-always-saved. The righteous man can turn from his life of righteousness, and then lose his soul (Rm 11:22; see comments Rv 2:10). ***Stumbling block before him:*** God will take responsibility for allowing free-moral individuals to live in a world wherein temptation exists. He will allow one to sin, but judge him for his sinful way of life because he free-morally chose to sin (2 Th 2:10-12).

3:22-27 ***Hand of the Lord:*** Boldness to go forth with the word of God comes when one knows that God is present in his life (See Mt 28:20). ***Arise, go:*** After seven days of contemplation, it was time to go to work. ***They will put bonds on you:*** Anyone who would preach the truth of God, must expect retribution from those who do not want to hear (At 9:16). The retribution here would come from the people of God, not from the unbelievers. Religious people who are ignorant of the word of God are those who persecute those who preach the word (Compare comments Mt 5:1-12; Mk 7:1-9). ***Cleave to the roof of your mouth:*** God wanted to frustrate Ezekiel by not allowing him to preach to Israel for a period of time. Once the word of God burned in his inner soul while he was shut up in his house, then he would be ready to go forth with determination to warn the people. God wanted him to go forth with passion, understanding that it was imperative that the people hear the message that He had given to him.

Prophecies Before The Fall
(4:1 – 24:27)

Outline: (1) 5th year prophecies: Symbolic acts (4:1 – 7:27), (2) 6th year prophecies: Discourses of Judah's destruction (8:1 – 19:14), (3) 7th year prophecies: Abominations of the people (20:1 – 23:49), (4) Prophecy before the fall (24:1-27)

Chapter 4

5TH YEAR PROPHECIES: SYMBOLIC ACTS

The prophecies of this text were acted out in a dramatic display before the people. Visual aids were used in order to portray the meaning of the prophecies.

4:1-3 This was a prophecy of the siege of Jerusalem. The siege began about four years after this prophecy and lasted for thirty months. The city eventually fell in 586 B.C. The clay tablet could have been a clay brick on which Ezekiel inscribed the city of Jerusalem. The iron plate symbolized the walls of Jerusalem, which walls were torn down when the city fell to the Babylonians.

4:4-8 This prophecy was an acted out drama. Ezekiel laid on his left side for 390 days for the northern kingdom of Israel, and on his right side 40 days for Judah, for a total of 430 days. According to verse 6 each day was to represent a year. In this prophecy, it is difficult to determine the meaning of the 430 years. It may be that God's actual siege against Israel and Judah began when the Israelites asked for a king on earth to reign over them. This succession of Israelite kings began with King Saul which was about 430 years before the termination of Israel as an independent state. If this is what is signified here, then it at least conforms to the 400 to 500 year period of history after which a sociological paradigm shift took place in the history of Israel, which period would have begun from the time of Jacob's initial entry into Egypt to begin the 430 years when Israel was in Egypt. Israel was in the wilderness and land of promise from 1,445 until about 1,000 before they asked for a king. From the time of King Saul to the termination of Israel's earthly kings in 586 B.C., God laid siege against their desire for an earthly king. In 586 B.C. God terminated the Israelite kings on earth (Jr 22:30). From the time of their captivity to the time of Christ, 536 years, they were without a God-anointed king. And now, Jesus is the God-anointed King of kings (1 Tm 6:15). Regardless of our understanding of the period of time that is designated in this prophecy of Ezekiel, the meaning is that God punished His people for turning away from Him in order to serve earthly kings and worship idol gods.

4:9-17 ***Food ... water:*** Ezekiel was to ration to himself a small portion of food and water throughout the time he laid on his side. This depravation of food and water symbolized the rationing of food and water that took place during the siege of Jerusalem (Jr 37:21). ***Bake it over dung:*** In order to manifest the deplorable conditions that existed in Jerusalem during the siege, and the deplorable nature of Israel's sin, the food was to be cooked over man's dung. Ezekiel complained to God that he had not defiled himself by eating abominable things since his youth. He had been a young man with principles. God relinquished to his desire after testing his commitment to the law of God, and thus allowed him to cook his food over cow's dung. God was not insensitive to his personal convictions. However, in writing this prophecy, we understand the deplorable nature of the sinful state into which His people had fallen because of the original instructions that were given to Ezekiel. The Jews had greatly defiled themselves with idol gods and unrighteous behavior.

Chapter 5

5:1-4 Ezekiel was commanded to shave his head and his beard, and then divide the shavings into three portions. With each of the portions he was to demonstrate what was to happen in the destruction of Jerusalem.

5:5-17 Jerusalem had become the physical symbol of Israel's existence. It was the last symbol to signify Israel as an independent nation. In order for God to mold His people again, He had to destroy every symbol of nationhood. He took them from their land, and now He was taking away Jerusalem and the temple, their symbols of existence and His presence. ***More than the nations:*** Because they had the privilege of being given the oracles of God directly, they had greater responsibility (See Rm 3:2). Since they had the privilege of God being manifested so many times in their past, they fell away from Him more than the nations. Their opportunity of having God work directly in their history made them more responsible to be faithful to Him. ***One-third portion:*** The portions of hair represented what would be the fate of the Israelites who were still held up in Jerusalem. One third would die from disease and famine. One third would be killed. One third would go into captivity. Only a few of the poorest would be left in the land. But even these would suffer greatly. Once this judgment had been rendered to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, then God would have completed His punishment for all Israel that had gone deeply into idolatrous worship. ***Fathers will eat their sons:*** The conditions during the siege of Jerusalem would be so deplorable that the people would resort to cannibalism. God would allow the situation to digress to such a point in order to teach the nations that since Israel claimed to be His people, then it had to be manifested that when they forsook Him, He would punish them. We must keep in mind, that the extent to which the calamity went for their punishment, their restoration would manifest the greatness of the miracle of their rebirth. In their apostasy, the Jews were a reproach to the name of God among the nations. However, the nations would later wonder concerning their rebirth after 539 B.C. when the Medo-Persians allowed former captives to return to their homelands. Except for Egypt, the other nations that rejoiced over Israel's fall went out of existence.

Chapter 6

6:1-7 In this chapter the silence of Ezekiel is broken, and thus, through him God delivered a stern rebuke in reference to Israel's idolatrous ways. The condemnation of idolatry is addressed to all Israel, including those who had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. ***The mountains:*** The high places to which they went to worship their idol gods were here brought under condemnation. The worship of false gods split their loyalty between the false gods of their imagination and the true God of heaven. They manifested in their behavior this dichotomy in their religion. Whenever man makes an idol god, whether fictitious in his mind, or when he worships of things of this world, he cannot give his total commitment to God. The idolater, therefore, has committed spiritual adultery (Hs 1:2; Js 4:4). The extremity into which Israel went in idolatry determined the extremity of punishment to be

handed down to her in order to cure the people of their idolatrous spirit.

6:8-10 ***A remnant:*** Though God would bring the Jewish state to a conclusion, He would spare some of the people. From this remnant, He would begin again to build a nation from which the Messiah would come. ***Remember Me among the nations:*** God would take away their idolatrous spirit by placing them in lands where they would refuse to worship the gods of their captors. In this way, they would return to remembering the God of heaven. ***I have been hurt:*** Idolatry is a taunt and rejection of the one God. God is a God of feelings, and thus men should never think that it does not hurt God to see His children turn from Him (Js 4:4). ***Loathe themselves:*** The time would come when the Jews would totally abhor idol worship. They would look back on their idolatrous behavior and loathe how they were. The last generation that was taken into captivity would give birth to a new generation that would learn from the error of their fathers. They would realize that the great calamity that befell Israel was the result of hurting God through idolatry. The Jews would never again become an idolatrous people as they were when they existed as an independent nation in the land of Palestine. ***Not said in vain:*** God had told them that they would be taken into captivity if they turned to idolatry. We must be assured, therefore, that God will bring eternal calamity on those who do not obey the gospel (2 Th 1:6-9).

6:11-14 ***Then you will know:*** Their national calamity was the fulfillment of prophecy. God had warned them what He would do if they went into apostasy. The fulfillment of the prophecy concerning their idolatry would prove that God had spoken through His prophets. ***Slain men will be among their idols:*** The picture here is graphic. During, and immediately after the destruction, there would be dead bodies lying among their idols, on their idol altars, on the high places of their idol worship, on the tops of mountains, and under the trees where they committed acts of fornication in worship to their idol gods.

Chapter 7

7:1-9 ***Four corners:*** The end had come for all the land. ***According to your ways:*** See 2 Co 5:10. ***Repay:*** See comments Gl 6:7,8. ***You will know:*** They would know that God was at work in the calamity that He would bring upon them because of these very prophecies that were made concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. ***Joyful shouting:*** The joyous shouting at harvest time will pass away.

7:10-15 ***Pride has budded:*** Their pride had resulted in the doom that was coming upon them. No one would feel sorry for them because of their past arrogance. ***The seller:*** Reference here was to the property laws in Israel. One could sell his inheritance to another. However, all property was to be restored to the original owner every fifty years in the year of Jubilee. In this case, those who were taken into captivity would not return. The first captives would die in captivity. Their captivity would last beyond the fifty years of Jubilee. ***No one goes to battle:*** The famine that existed within the city of Jerusalem before its fall was so severe that no one had enough energy to fight. Fighting the well-nourished Babylonians, therefore, was useless.

7:16-22 Though some will escape into the mountains, they will mourn because they realize that the calamity came upon them because of their iniquity. ***Shame ... baldness:*** They will shave their heads because of their shame. ***The stumbling block of their iniquity:*** Since their materialism had led them into being an unjust society, they would discover that they could not buy their way out of the impending doom. This statement enlightens us concerning the real problem that lead Israel into idolatry and their downfall. Solomon introduced a wealthy life-style. The people followed after his life-style until it led them into being an unjust society that oppressed the poor. ***Used it to make the abominable idols:*** Since there was no banking system, the people molded their gold and silver into idols. Thus the wealth that was represented by their idols became the focus of their lives. The more idols one had, the richer he was (See comments Cl 3:5). In the time of their calamity, however, their gold and silver would mean nothing, for they would fear for their lives. ***My secret place:*** The result of their iniquity will result in the Babylonians' entrance into the temple and taking all the utensils and furniture of bronze, silver and gold.

7:23-27 ***Prepare chains:*** It was time for captivity. Psalm 74 seems to have been written immediately after the fall of Jerusalem by one who had fled to the mountains of Judea. ***Seek a vision:*** They will seek God, but He will not be found. ***What they deserve:*** They had rendered unto others that which they will reap. Their iniquity was within their own Jewish society. Their wickedness, therefore, was carried out upon themselves. They were a society that was morally in a state of self-destruction. Before they completely brought themselves to an end, God brought the invasion of the Babylonians in order to save a remnant from themselves.

Chapter 8
6TH YEAR PROPHECIES: DISCOURSES OF JUDAH'S DESTRUCTION

8:1-6 This vision took place in the sixth year of the imprisonment of King Jehoiachin (591 B.C.). The Spirit took Ezekiel in vision by the hair of his head to the city of Jerusalem. The Spirit brought him to the idol that had been placed at the entrance of the temple (See 2 Ch 33:7,15). It was an idol that provoked jealousy in God, for the people were spiritual idolaters. They were halfhearted religionists who compromised their total commitment to God.

8:7-12 ***Hole in the wall:*** What the people thought was concealed from the eyes of God, was actually known by Him. ***Wicked abominations:*** When Ezekiel went into the inner part of the temple, he saw images of animals that were displayed around on all the walls of the temple. Those who were carrying out their idol worship led themselves to believe that God did not know their detestable works. They denied the omniscience of God.

8:13-18 ***Tammuz:*** This was a god of vegetation and fertility that the Babylonians had adopted from the Sumerians. ***The sun:*** There was symbolism in the fact that they turned

their backs on the temple, the representation of the presence of God. They did so in order to worship the sun. The sun was an object of the worship of the Canaanites, which worship was also adopted by the Assyrians. ***Putting the twig to their nose:*** This is a literal translation of a figure of speech that means the people were throwing their obscenities in the face of God. ***I will not hear them:*** They had digressed so far away from God, that they had no reverence for Him. Since God is real, and their idol gods and worship were false, then the conclusion would be that the people were no longer representatives for God (Compare comments Rv 2 & 3). The progression of their religion led them to the point of this great digression away from the God who brought them forth as a nation out of Egyptian captivity. In their sin, therefore, God would not hear their pleas for His help. God could not help them simply because if He did, they would not represent Him on earth as their only God.

Chapter 9

9:1,2 It was time for judgment. The six angelic beings stood ready to execute slaughter of the people who had given themselves over to false gods. The symbolism is of Nebuchadnezzar who would come to Jerusalem with his army from the northern part of Palestine. One angelic being with a writer's kit would first place a mark on those who were to survive. These would be those who were trapped among those apostates who were rebellious against surrendering themselves to the Babylonians.

9:3-7 There was mercy manifested before the slaughter. Before the slaughter was to begin in Jerusalem, those who mourned over the abominations that had been brought into the temple and practiced among the people were to be marked and spared (Compare Rv 7:3,4; 22:4). Those who had given themselves over to idol worship were to be slaughtered. Once the mournful righteous were identified, the slaughter was to begin. ***Defile the temple:*** When a person touched a dead body, he was unclean for a designated period of time. In this picture, the temple would be defiled by the presence of so many dead bodies.

9:8-11 In the vision, Ezekiel was in awe of the number of people who were slaughtered, wondering if there would be any who would be saved. He cried out for mercy. ***Israel and Judah:*** The destruction of Jerusalem was the finality of God's judgment on all Israel, both for the northern and southern kingdoms. The north went into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. The destruction of Jerusalem signalled the end of the southern kingdom. The angelic being with the writer's kit reported that all was carried out according to the instructions of the Lord. This announcement indicated that those who would be saved out of the destruction had been identified, and thus the slaughter could begin. In reference to Ezekiel's concern of a total destruction, the answer was that there were those who were marked for salvation. There would be no total destruction of the people. Many would go into captivity. Their punishment, however, would be both captivity and death in captivity, for they would never return to Jerusalem. Such were the consequences of their turn from the word of God (See Hs 4:6).

Chapter 10

10:1-5 In this vision Ezekiel sees similar things to what he saw in chapter 1. ***Cherubim:*** See Is 6:1-6. ***Clothed with linen:*** This was the angelic being who had the writer's kit in the previous chapter. In chapter 9 he marked those who would be spared. Here he is commanded to set fire to the city. The presence of the cherubim was a sign that judgment was coming upon Jerusalem. As a result of the judgment, there was cleansing of the temple, signifying a restoration of the presence of God in the hearts of the people.

10:6-22 This vision corresponds to the vision of chapter 1, though there are some added details. It is difficult to understand the meaning of every detail of the vision. For this reason, the interpreter should be cautious about inventing spurious thoughts that are out of harmony with the immediate application of the visions. In this vision, the splendor and awesomeness of those who bring judgment on Jerusalem must not be questioned. Since God is the one who is commanding the judgment to take place, then we must conclude that He is doing so for good reasons. Though there are some new details in this vision, the message is the same as the previous visions, that is that God's judgment on Jerusalem was just because of the iniquity of the people. The nation had digressed to the point that it was no longer useful for His purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world. Although all Israel had not gone after idols, the vast majority had. It was a time in the history of Israel, therefore, that the majority was about to overcome even those few who remained faithful. The purpose of the destruction and captivity, therefore, was to give birth to a new Israel that could be identified as the people of God. It would be through this restored and identifiable people that God would fulfill His promises to the fathers that the Redeemer would come into the world.

Chapter 11

11:1-13 This is a prophecy of judgment on Jerusalem. This prophecy is a picture of 25 leaders at the temple who were advising rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. In their rebellion, they looked to Egypt for support, for Egypt too was fearful of the Babylonian domination of the region. Contrary to the prophecies of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, these leaders refused to believe that the end of Jerusalem had come. They thus sought to rebuke the prophecies of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They saw the fortified city of Jerusalem as a caldron that would protect the people from all enemies, including Nebuchadnezzar. But Ezekiel prophesied that they would not be protected. God would subject the Israelites throughout their borders, for the entire land would fall to the Babylonians. Jaazaniah and Pelatiah were two leaders among the 25 leaders at the time. While Ezekiel was in the vision, Pelatiah fell dead. His death seemed to shock Ezekiel, for he questioned whether God would destroy the entire nation of Israel.

11:14-23 These verses are the answer to Ezekiel's question concerning the fate of all Israel. The majority of the people had moved far away from the Lord. However, there was a remnant of faithful among the people. For their sake, God would not destroy all the people. The faithful remnant did

not side with the unfaithful leadership who were giving the people a false hope that the city would not fall. Many of the faithful remnant were already in captivity, and thus were not living in the doomed Jerusalem. These were those who gave heed to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and thus resigned themselves to captivity. Jerusalem would indeed become a caldron, but the rebellious would be the meat cooked in it. Those who had already gone into captivity, however, were in the protection of their captors, and thus they would survive. ***I will gather you:*** No matter where the Israelites were scattered among the nations, God would gather a remnant of them to the land. ***Take away all the detestable things:*** Upon their return to the land, they would never again give themselves over to idols. ***A new spirit:*** The spiritual character of the returnees would be different than the rebellious heart of their fathers. ***One heart:*** They would be totally dedicated to the one God. Their loyalty would never be divided between God and idols. It would never again be divided between a king on earth and a King in heaven. If we would infer that there are Messianic implications in these words, then we would be looking for the one body that would be of one mind (At 4:32; 1 Co 1:10). It would exist as one body because all would submit to the one head and King. ***A heart of flesh:*** The stony heart of rebellion and stubbornness would be replaced with a heart of compassion and obedience (See Dt 30:6). What Ezekiel sees in the vision here, and in 36:26,27, is similar to what was revealed to Jeremiah (Jr 31:31-33). A time was coming for a new covenant, which covenant would be for a people who came into a covenant relationship with God through their obedience to the gospel. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel used the illustration of the returning remnant of Israel after the Babylonian captivity to picture the beginning of a new heavens and earth that would begin in A.D. 30 (See comments At 2). ***The glory of the Lord went up:*** God figuratively removed Himself from the city in order that His punishment be enacted on the inhabitants. Both the city and the temple were to be destroyed. ***East side:*** The Mount of Olives was to the east of the city.

11:24,25 Ezekiel was brought back to Chaldea at the end of the vision. He then spoke to the exiles in order to confirm what Jeremiah was speaking to those in Jerusalem. The city would in a few years fall to the Babylonians.

Chapter 12

12:1-6 This is another action prophecy. Ezekiel dramatized what would happen in the near future concerning the fall of Jerusalem. ***Do not see:*** They disregarded his previous spoken prophecy in chapter 6. ***Prepare your baggage:*** Ezekiel acted out that which would take place concerning one going into exile. In the evening, he was to dig a hole in the wall of his house. Then he was in the daylight to crawl through the hole with a cover over his eyes. He was to stumble through the hole and away from his house. The symbolism was that those who did dig a hole and escape to the Babylonians, would live. Those who did not, would die from the slaughter that would take place as the Babylonians entered the city.

12:7-16 ***What are you doing:*** Since they did not ask, God instructed Ezekiel to prophecy in word what he had acted out. ***They will know:*** The prophecy was being made at this time before the fall of the city. Once the city fell, then they would know that the prophecy came from God. It seems that the Jews were so certain that the city would not fall, that it astonished them when it did. ***I will leave a few:*** A few would be spared from the destruction in order to tell others what had happened. The 30-month siege of Nebuchadnezzar against the city would turn the inhabitants into cannibals. Others needed to know the fulfillment of the prophecies of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They needed to know in order to confirm that the prophecies were fulfilled in every detail. ***Cover his face:*** Zedekiah tried to escape when Jerusalem fell. However, he was captured. His sons were killed before his eyes, then his eyes were put out and he was marched to Babylon (2 Kg 25:4-7; Jr 52:7-11).

12:17-20 Ezekiel was to dramatize life in Jerusalem before it fell. Both food and water would be scarce during the siege, so scarce that the people would turn to cannibalism. Many of the people died from the famine within the city, others from pestilence.

12:21-28 ***Days are prolonged:*** Because they did not believe the city would fall, it became a customary saying that God's judgment on the city would only come in the far future. The false prophets were preaching peace and safety, though doom was near. ***Every vision fails:*** The visions of the false prophets would fail when the city fell, for they were saying that it would not fall. When preachers preach peace when it is time for judgment, they will go into captivity with those they did not warn concerning imminent doom. ***Fulfillment of every vision:*** The visions of the true prophets of God would be fulfilled when Jerusalem fell. The false prophets, with their false visions of peace and safety, would pass away. What God had said would happen. It would not be prolonged. It would take place only a few years after this prophecy was made. Therefore, if one interprets these prophecies, that have reference to the history of Israel, as prophecy in reference to the end of time, he has misunderstood the prophecies. He has stolen from the people of God at the time these prophecies were made, hope for their future restoration. The prophecies were directed to the people of God who were suffering through great national calamity. One thousand years as a nation were coming to a close. The prophecies, therefore, were given in order to give the people of God hope for a restored Israel that would wait for the Messiah.

Chapter 13

13:1-7 Everyone who would presume to be a spokesman for God should carefully study through this chapter (See Jr 23:9-40). There are many religionists in the world today who presume to speak for God, but they know nothing of His word. This was the case of the false prophet. He spoke what the people wanted to hear (See comments 2 Tm 4:1-4). He even sought to add authenticity to his statements by saying, "The Lord says." But because he was speaking outside the word of God, he was speaking falsehoods to the people. He was a false prophet because he would not tell the people the truth about the impending doom that awaited the people. Therefore, whenever one would say, "The Lord says," he should

be following the statement with a quotation from the word of God, not his own dreams and supposed visions. ***Followed their own feelings:*** Those who do not preach the word of God validate their own message for themselves through their feelings. They will preach feel-good lessons in order to retain the favor and support of those to whom they preach. They are as Balaam who preached for money (See 2 Pt 2:15; Jd 11).

13:8-16 ***They will not be in the assembly of My people:*** Those who would speak contrary to the word of God have voted themselves out of the company of God's people. They cannot be of God's people simply because they are not listening to God. Those who are not students of the Bible are not disciples, for they are not listening to God who speaks through His word (See comments At 20:32). ***Seduced My people:*** They have prophesied what the people wanted to hear in order to maintain the following of the people (2 Tm 4:1-4). There was financial security in their motives, for they were supported by the people. They did not want to endanger their support by preaching the word of God. ***Whitewash:*** They whitewashed it. It looked fine until the rains came and washed away the whitewash. The false prophets were as dishonest builders who presented a fine looking house to the new owner. However, the house was weak and vulnerable to the summer storms.

13:17-23 ***Prophesy out of their own heart:*** They were spiritual frauds, presumptuously assuming that their emotions were some revelation from God. These prophetesses preached for money, a handful of barley or piece of bread. Being driven by their desire for sustenance, they would speak anything that was pleasing to the ears of the people in order to maintain their support from the people. When people in poverty assume to speak for God, they are tempted to speak only that which their supporters want to hear. They are often as Balaam who preached for hire (See Jd 11). ***The souls:*** In this case, they reversed the messages of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The people who were to die, were the ones they said would live, and the ones whom Jeremiah and Ezekiel said would live, they said would die. ***Magic bands:*** They gave out "magic charms" in order to give the people a false sense of hope. However, the righteous who believed Jeremiah and Ezekiel were made sad by the influence the deceptive women had over the people. And indeed it was a sad time when false prophets were speaking contrary to that which God had spoken through His prophets. The time was coming, however, when the false prophets would all die in the destruction of Jerusalem. God's prophets would be confirmed to be His prophets because their prophecies would have been fulfilled. The people would then know that God was to be the Lord of their lives.

Chapter 14

14:1-11 Some elders among the captives came to sit before Ezekiel. They were idolaters in heart, and thus would on this occasion reap the rebuke of the Lord. ***Should I be consulted by them:*** The hypocrisy of the elders was in the fact that in their hearts they still bowed down to their idols. On this occasion, they had the audacity to seek council from God through His prophet Ezekiel. ***Repent:*** This was God's message for all those who still clung to their past idols. ***Estranged:*** When one idolizes something in his heart, he cannot give his full commitment to God (See comments Mt 6:24). ***I ... have deceived that prophet:*** See comments 2 Th 2:10-12. ***Israel may no longer go astray from Me:*** God had disciplined Israel by taking them through the destruction of the land and Jerusalem. Throughout the destruction, idolatrous priests and prophets died. Such was the first cleansing of the people from idolatry. Those who placed themselves in spiritual leadership for the sake of gain had to be taken from among the people before the people could be turned again to God. Now that the captives were in captivity, there still remained some of the false prophets and idol worshipers among the people. In this context, God said that He would destroy this remnant of idolaters from among the people. When the time for the restoration came, therefore, Israel would have been cleansed of all idol worshipers.

14:12-20 The primary theme of this context is individual obedience to God. Righteous living, therefore, was the only guarantee of being delivered from the judgments of God. The righteousness of one person cannot save another, and thus one is accountable for his own life before the Lord (See comments 2 Co 5:10). Even if one were as righteous as Noah, Daniel and Job, his righteousness could not save neither son nor daughter. ***Daniel:*** Daniel was also a prophet among the captives in Babylon. His righteousness was well-known among the captives, and thus God used him as an example of standing firm for the word of God (See comments in intro. to Dn).

14:21-23 You will be comforted concerning the calamity: The righteous are comforted by those who are like-minded. When God delivered the righteous from the destruction of Jerusalem, He brought them to Babylon. It was a great comfort to Ezekiel to meet these righteous people who had surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar according to the instructions of Jeremiah, who was preaching in Jerusalem during the destruction. Once the righteous were delivered, Ezekiel understood why God brought doom upon the city. He understood that God wanted to cleanse Israel of all those who were unrighteous.

Chapter 15

15:1-8 ***The vine:*** Israel was often referred to as a vine that should bring forth good fruit (Gn 49:11; Is 5:1-7; Jr 2:21). In this context, however, reference to Israel as a vine was a metaphor that referred to the nation as useless before God. Vines are not good for wood to make objects that are useful to man. One cannot make a peg from a vine in order to hang objects. Therefore, except for bearing fruit, a vine is useless. Israel had turned into a wild vine, and even her fruit was useless. The prophecy was of the destruction of Jerusalem. They would be consumed because they were not profitable for the purpose for which God had created the nation. When they were consumed, then the people would know that the Lord was working through the destruction.

Chapter 16

16:1-5 This chapter is a sad allegory of the history of Israel. It is a story of an unfaithful wife who went into harlotry,

regardless of all her innocent origins and care. The allegory begins with the birth of Israel from Egyptian captivity, and follows the history of the people to the destruction of Jerusalem. The northern kingdom would first reap the judgment of God, then Judah, the southern kingdom, and finally, Jerusalem. God brought forth Israel from Egyptian captivity. However, regardless of His care over her, she ran after other gods of her own making. At the time of her deliverance from Egypt, no nation of the world cared for her since she was viewed as a group of rebellious slaves who had rebelled, and thus gained their freedom from the Egyptians. The nations abhorred her throughout the years of her wilderness wanderings and conquest of the land of Palestine. ***Salted ... swaddled:*** Salting the newborn was for the purpose of cleansing and dedication to God. Swaddling was for the purpose of protecting the newborn from the elements.

16:6-14 Newborn Israel was as a newborn babe that just came from the womb. The babe struggled in its own blood without anyone to help. But God reached down in order that Israel might live, develop and become a beautiful nation to His glory. As was common in pagan nations, as a newborn female, she would have been left to die. But God reached down with grace and compassion. He declared that she should live. ***Entered into a covenant:*** As in a marriage covenant, at Mount Sinai God entered into a covenant with His people. He made promises of blessing to care for them. ***I washed you:*** In the ceremony at Sinai, God cleansed the people with the sprinkling of blood in order to ratify the covenant. ***I adorned you also with ornaments:*** God brought Israel into the land of milk and honey. He prospered them, even to the zenith of their glory during the reign of King Solomon. ***Your fame:*** God blessed Israel so much that the fame of the kingdom went unto all nations. From a small nation of captives who had come out of Egyptian captivity, to the grandeur of the kingdom during the days of Solomon, Israel was blessed exceedingly above all nations.

16:15-22 ***Played the harlot:*** When Israel became appealing to the nations as an influential nation, then she gave herself over to the idols of the nations for the sake of economic gain. Her blessings, therefore, became her curse. She used the beauty that was given to her by God as an opportunity to make trade alliances with the nations. And in doing so, beginning with Solomon, she gave herself over to the gods of the nations. The very silver and gold that was given to her by God was used to make the idols of the gods she had created after her own imagination. ***Everyone who passed by:*** Israel was given the major trade route between the northern nations of the Near East and the nations of Africa. It was God's original intention that when traders passed through Palestine, the Israelites would have an opportunity to talk to the traders about the one true and living God. However, instead of being the international influence for God that was originally intended by God, she adopted the gods of the nations. She compromised the God who gave her birth for the sake of trade with the nations of other gods. ***Sacrificed them to idols:*** They morally digressed to the point of offering their children in sacrifice to gods they had created after their own imagination.

16:23-34 Israel digressed to be morally worse than the nations around her. She could not be satisfied with her idolatry. After all that God had done for her in the past, which things He had not done for the idolatrous nations around her, she became skilled in the art of idol worship, even to the point of offering her children as sacrifices. In order to be constantly reminded of her fictitious gods, she made and placed idols in every public place. She adopted so many idol gods from the nations around her that even the pagan nations, who were loyal only to their national gods, were alarmed at her idolatry. The idol gods of the nations were a symbol of patriotism. But Israel adopted the symbols of patriotism of the other nations for the sake of maintaining trade relationships with the nations. Her strategic trade route in Palestine led her to adopt the patriotic gods of any nation that would bring her wealth. She thus sold the God of her origin for the gods of any nation that would bring her prosperity.

16:35-43 ***Filthiness:*** This was the Holy Spirit's term to define false religion. This was the reason for the judgment that God would pour out on an apostate people. ***Lovers:*** These were the nations with whom Israel had formed alliances, both for trade and protection, which nations God would turn against her. Israel would be subjected to the same judgment as adulterous wives. She would be publicly shamed before the nations, and stoned. ***Make My fury toward you to rest:*** God would unleash just judgment upon them until the full measure of His punishment was completed. It would be completed only when they had completely given up idolatrous religion.

16:44-52 ***Your sister Sodom:*** Because Israel had received great attention and love from God, she had greater responsibility, and thus would be judged with greater judgment. ***Samaria:*** This would be the northern kingdom that had already suffered the Assyrian captivity. Judah was arrogant when the northern kingdom fell, and was self-righteous in reference to the destruction that came upon Sodom. But in her arrogance and pride, she had to bear her own shame for being a woman of harlotry.

16:53-59 There was a message of hope in a sad story of betrayal. The people were going into captivity. In captivity they would be cleansed of their idolatry. They would be returned to the land, not as an independent nation, but only as an identifiable people, the Israel of God.

16:60-63 Ezekiel concludes the allegory with a message of a new covenant. It would be a new covenant that would extend to all nations (See comments Jr 31:31-34). It would be a covenant that would include all people.

Chapter 17

17:1-6 ***Riddle ... parable:*** A riddle was embedded in this parable. By doing this, God wanted the people to draw their own conclusions, which conclusions would be obviously correct. The parable would be so clear that they could not miss the application. The riddle would be explained after the occurrence of the events that were set forth as a parable. ***Great eagle:*** The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. ***Different colors:*** Nebuchadnezzar led an alliance of nations that were

under his command. ***Highest branch:*** King Jehoiachin. ***The seed:*** Zedekiah was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar as the king in Judah. ***Low stature:*** Zedekiah was a subject, or vassal, to Babylon.

17:7-10 ***Another great eagle:*** Egypt would rise up to help Judah against the attack by Babylon. ***Wither:*** During the siege of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar left the siege for a short period of time in order to squash the approaching Egyptians. And then again in 582/581 B.C., he invaded Egypt and sacked the country. ***East wind:*** The Babylonians who were east of Palestine.

17:11-21 ***Rebellious house:*** Ezekiel was in Babylonia prophesying to those who were already in captivity. The exiled Jews were rebellious in that they thought that they would soon return to the land of Palestine. They did not accept the fact that they would die in captivity. ***Taken its king:*** This occurred in 597 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin and the princess into captivity. ***The king's seed:*** Zedekiah. ***Subjected:*** Nebuchadnezzar subjected Judah to Babylonian dominance. Zedekiah rebelled against Babylonian control, and then went to seek help from Egypt. This subsequently infuriated the Babylonians, who in turn came and destroyed Jerusalem. ***Given his hand:*** Zedekiah agreed to be a vassal king to Babylon, but he went back on his word and rebelled. He broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. ***My oath ... My covenant:*** When Zedekiah swore an oath to Nebuchadnezzar, the oath was before God, and thus, it was binding as an oath with God. So when he broke the oath, he was breaking an oath he had made before God (See Jr 21:1-10). ***Trespassed against Me:*** When one broke his oath to another man, it was a sin against God, for oaths were laws that one binds on himself in reference to his obedience to God.

17:22-24 This conclusion to the preceding parable was a prophecy of the Messiah to come (Is 53:2; Jr 23:5; Mc 4:1-3). Once all the national turmoil of the nations among whom the preceding events had taken place, then God would send forth the King of kings who would draw people from all nations to find protection under His wings.

Chapter 18

18:1-18 ***Fathers have eaten sour grapes:*** This was a proverb that was commonly spoken among the captives (See Jr 31:29,30; compare Lm 5:7). The proverb was false in reference to the guilt of sin. The children were not considered unrighteous because of the personal sins of their fathers. The guilt of sin was never handed down from father to son. However, in reference to the consequences of the fathers' sinful behavior in reference to idolatry, the sons did suffer from the results of the fathers' sins. In the historical context here, the fathers were an idolatrous generation who turned from God. God subsequently condemned them to captivity (See Ex 20:5). The sons who were born in captivity, therefore, suffered from the consequences of the fathers' sinful idolatrous behavior. ***The soul that sins, it will die:*** It must be kept in mind that in the context of this chapter the phrase "surely die" is used first in reference to physical death. Those who had lived immorally after the idolatrous religiosity of the day would be punished with death. They would either die during the calamity that was brought upon Israel, or die in captivity. Their punishment for not repenting of their wicked ways would be physical death, which punishment would eventually end in their second death and separation from God. In life, they had sinned against God's law. Because of their sins, each individual would give account of his own sin (2 Co 5:10). We will individually be held accountable for our own sins, and thus die in our sins if we do not repent. The Bible nowhere teaches that the children inherit the guilt of the parents' sins. Ezekiel gave a list of actions that identified unrighteous behavior. ***Eaten to shrines:*** This was part of their worship to idol gods on the high places (Is 65:7). ***Neighbor's wife ... menstruate woman:*** Reference here is to adultery and having sexual intercourse with a woman when she was in her period of uncleanness during the month. ***Pledge:*** Restoring the property that was given as a pledge for a loan. ***Plundered:*** Not stealing another man's property by force. ***Given his bread:*** Being benevolent toward the hungry. ***Covered the naked:*** Guarding the modesty of oneself and others. ***Interest:*** See 22:25; Lv 25:36; Dt 23:19; Ps 15:5.

18:19-24 ***The son ... will surely live:*** This must be understood in the historical context of the first generation of captives among whom Ezekiel was prophesying. God swore that they would die in captivity. However, their children and grandchildren would be restored to the land after the seventy years of captivity had been completed. It was this generation of exiles who were cleansed of unrighteous behavior, and thus were allowed to return to the land. But those fathers who brought on Israel the wrath of God through their idolatrous behavior and wicked living would never see the land again. They would suffer from the guilt of their own sins. ***If the wicked will turn:*** This exhortation would have been to the fathers, that they focus on their repentance for their own sins. If they repented, they would save their souls. They would then pass on to their children a life-style of repentance and righteousness that would allow the children to return to the land. ***The soul who sins will die:*** Israel ended up in captivity because they sinned against the law of God. In this context, the nation as a whole was composed of sinful individuals. Disobedient individuals developed a collective culture of sin. However, each individual was responsible for his own disobedience. Neither father nor son passed the guilt of their personal sins to the other. Each person would be held accountable for his own sin, regardless of whether they lived in a sinful culture where everyone was living according to sinful ways. ***When the righteous turns away:*** There is no such thing as once saved, always saved. The apostate has turned away from righteousness. He was first righteous, and then he turned away from righteous behavior. And because he turned away, he became lost. ***All his righteousness:*** One's good deeds do not atone for one's sins. The obedient life-style is what constitutes righteousness before God.

18:25-32 ***The way of the Lord is not fair:*** This was a complaint. God was fair and just to mete out judgment upon those apostate fathers who had turned to idol gods. He was fair to bring on them the consequences of their sinful behavior.

Though the sons had to suffer the consequences of the wicked behavior of the fathers, God was still acting fairly to bring judgment in time upon the unrighteous behavior of the fathers. The exhortation in this context is that the sons do not adopt the idolatrous and wicked behavior of their fathers that led to their captivity. ***Make for yourself a new heart:*** Each person will be held accountable for his own sin (2 Co 5:10). Since each person was created a free-moral individual, then each person must be held accountable for the guilt of his own sin. God is a fair God because it is man who chooses to sin. When one is condemned for his own sin, then God is fair and just. He is fair and just because He gave man law by which to live, and declared to man the consequences of his violation of the law. It is the responsibility of each person, therefore, to voluntarily obey the will of God, and thus create a new heart with a spirit of obedience.

Chapter 19

19:1-9 This is a lamentation for the princes (kings) of Israel. Their mother, the nation of Israel, gave birth to their existence when they asked for a king to rule over them (1 Sm 8). ***Lion:*** The royal family (See Gn 49:9; Nm 23:24; Mc 5:8; Rv 5:5). ***Two cubs:*** In the historical context, reference here was probably to Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin. Jehoahaz reigned only three months before he was taken by Pharaoh-necho and put in prison (2 Kg 23:33). Jehoiachin reigned after Jehoahaz, but he was taken into Babylonian captivity in 597 B.C. (2 Kg 24:8-16). Israel had gone from God-anointed kings that they wanted during the end of Samuel's life, to foreign powers appointing kings for them. A king on earth was never in the plan of God for Israel. When the people cried out for a king, God gave them this concession (1 Sm 8). However, the kings would eventually lead them into apostasy.

19:10-14 The poem turns to the nation of Israel. She was a nation that was planted in the land of milk and honey. She prospered because of the work of God. She produced great kings to rule over her. And she was exalted among the nations. However, because of her apostasy from her creator, she was plucked up by the Babylonians from the east and planted in a desolate land. Her kings were broken and no more. They withered in the wilderness of Babylonia. Israel would never again have a God-appointed king on earth.

Chapter 20
7TH YEAR PROPHECIES: ABOMINATIONS OF THE PEOPLE

20:1-4 Seven years after Ezekiel's captivity in 597 B.C., or 590 B.C., some of the elders came to inquire of the Lord through Ezekiel. This was about one year after the previous prophecies of 8:1. Based on Ezekiel's answer to these elders, we would assume that they came to inquire about setting up idols again in the temple of Jerusalem, to which they believed they would be returned in the near future. But Ezekiel's answer was far from what they expected. He paralleled Israel's existence in the wilderness, that resulted from their rebellion after they came out of Egyptian captivity, with their rebellion at the end of their existence prior to the destruction of Jerusalem that would occur in 586 B.C. The destruction took place about four years from the time of this encounter.

20:5-9 ***Lifted up My hand:*** God took action to deliver Israel from Egyptian captivity. His first proclamation to them was that He was the only God among all the false gods of the Egyptians. He then gave them a land from which they were to eradicate all beliefs in false gods. ***They rebelled:*** Because of their rebellious spirit, they did not give up their idol culture of Egypt, which culture first made itself known when they molded the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai. ***I worked for My name's sake:*** God's use of Israel among the nations was evangelistic. He meant for them to be a monotheistic nation, proving them to be His people by His mighty works. They existed, therefore, only because God miraculously worked to bring them out of Egypt.

20:10-17 ***I caused them to go out:*** They could not deliver themselves from Egyptian captivity. When God delivered them from Egyptian captivity, the nations then understood that Israel's God was powerful enough to deliver them. ***He will live in them:*** God gave Israel commandments and statutes in order to change them from a culture of idolatry to a monotheistic culture of belief only in Him. The purpose for the law, therefore, was to change and direct their culture toward Him. If they would have continued to live according to His law, therefore, they would have remained a monotheistic culture. ***Sabbaths to be a sign:*** Their keeping of the sabbaths was an indication that they were a people who were in a covenant relationship with God. Their keeping of the sabbaths was a conscious acknowledgment before the nations that they were the people of God. ***Pour out My fury ... to consume them:*** Because of their rebellion at the foot of Mount Sinai, God was going to destroy the entire nation and start again to build another nation through Moses. But Moses interceded for the people. For Moses' sake, God held back His hand of destruction. However, those who rebelled were not allowed to enter into the land of promise. The same would happen to those elders who came before Ezekiel. Because of their rebellious and idolatrous spirit, they would not be allowed to return to the land of Palestine. The elders were assured that they would die a natural death in the wilderness of Babylon, but they would not be allowed to return to Palestine because they had rebelled against the statutes of God and profaned His sabbaths.

20:18-26 Throughout their 38 years of wilderness wanderings after their idolatrous rebellion at Mount Sinai, the rebellious fathers died. The children were trained to be a monotheistic culture, serving only God through obedience to His statutes. ***Sanctify My sabbaths:*** When they kept the sabbaths, they were signalling to God that they were obedient to His statutes. They were also signalling to the surrounding nations that they had a covenant with God. But the people rebelled again. However, God did not destroy them completely, for He continued to be patient with them for the sake of His name and the salvation of mankind. If God did not fulfill the promises made to the fathers, then His name would be blemished. ***I would scatter them:*** This statement would refer back to the time when they were scattered throughout the Sinai Peninsula during the 38 years of wilderness wanderings. They came to-

gether as one nation of people only when they gathered on the east side of the Jordan River in order to begin the conquest of the land. At the time Ezekiel wrote, they were scattered in the same way among the nations of the world, which scattering started with the Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. ***Statutes that were not good:*** The law was good and holy (See Rm 7:7-12). The law was not good in reference to salvation and a good conscience before God. No man could keep the law perfectly (Rm 3:9,10,23; see comments Gl 2:16). One's honest recognition that he cannot keep law perfectly should move him to trust in the grace of God (See comments Gl 2:1-16). But in Israel's case, they created idol gods after their own imagination and laws of these gods that they could legally keep in order to justify themselves before these gods. ***Pass through the fire:*** They offered their children in sacrifice to their idol gods in order to feel good before their gods. Instead of trusting in the grace of the God who brought them forth out of Egypt as a nation, they sought to appease their own guilt by obedience to laws they made for themselves. This was the spirit of idolatry that could not be removed from their culture by the commandments of God.

20:27-29 ***Every high hill ... thick trees:*** Their idolatrous spirit moved them to build high places of worship, or Asherah on the tops of the hills. They also made shrines in the groves. What was to be a blessing to them, became an opportunity to continue their idolatrous worship to false gods. ***Bamah:*** The meaning is "high place."

20:30-32 As representatives for the exiles, the elders were told that God would not listen to their pleas to return immediately to the land. They were still a generation of idolaters, seeking to identify with the Babylonian culture through their idolatry. If their children were to be candidates to return to the land of Palestine, they must put away their idol gods.

20:33-38 They had to submit to God's rule over them. When this was accomplished, then He would bring them out of their captivity as He brought them out of Egyptian captivity. God would bring back to the land only those who were submissive. A spirit of submission, not rebellion, would characterize those who would enter the land of Israel. ***Pass under the rod:*** When the shepherd brought the sheep into a boma (protected area) at night, they would be counted as they passed under his staff. He thus knew that each sheep was brought into his protection. ***Yoke of the covenant:*** Their submissive spirit would bring them again under obedience to the conditions of the covenant.

20:39-44 Those who would continue in idolatry were let go by God. They would no longer be of Israel. But the obedient Israel would be called again to return to the promised land where they would no longer profane the name of God through idolatry. These would again go unto the holy mountain of God's kingship over them. ***All the house of Israel:*** There are many promises throughout the prophets that all twelve tribes of Israel would be represented in the return to Palestine to re-establish the identity of Israel. There would be no lost tribes. If there were, then God's promises to the captives that all Israel would return to the land would have been false. ***Then you will know:*** The fulfillment of the prophecies that a remnant of all Israel was restored to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity was historical evidence that God was working in Israel. Psalm 83:4 is significant in reference to this historical miracle of God. The oppressing nations sought to destroy the identity of Israel, which they tried to accomplish through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Israel lost her identity as an independent nation with her own land. They became only captives of conquering world empires. The historical miracle of God was the restoration of their identity as a people, as well as their restoration to their homeland, though their homeland was governed by the Medo-Persians when they returned. It was then governed by the Greeks, and finally by the Romans. But they were restored as the people of God, ruled by their King from heaven and governed by the law of the covenant they had with their King.

20:45-49 Because the Babylonian army would approach Judah from the north, the prophecy here was to Judah to the south. It was a message of fire and destruction. In the allegory, Judah was the forest that would be consumed by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. ***Parable:*** Though the Hebrew word is here translated "parable," it can also be translated "allegory."

Chapter 21

21:1-7 The destruction of the land and Jerusalem will come through Nebuchadnezzar, who is used as the sword of the Lord. ***Righteous and the wicked:*** In this case, the righteous will suffer because of the sins of the wicked. When national calamity comes, the righteous are caught in the calamity that they did not produce. ***Sword ... will not return:*** The destruction will not stop until God has accomplished His purpose.

21:8-13 ***Sharpened:*** The sword would do its work effectively. ***Polished:*** It will come upon the people as a strike of lightning. Since such was to take place, it was not a time for mirth, that is, rejoicing. ***Despises the rod:*** Because they did not repent as a result of former discipline through famine and calamity within the land, they had to be taken from the land. ***Strike ... thigh:*** This was a Near East gesture of showing despair (Jr 31:19).

21:14-17 ***Strike your hands:*** This was a gesture that signalled activity to begin. The decision in the court of Nebuchadnezzar had been made to take action against the rebellious in Palestine. Even as Ezekiel spoke these words, it was probable that the Babylonian army was making preparations to march on Judah and Jerusalem.

21:18-23 Nebuchadnezzar was to march against the Ammonites and Judah. In the calamity that befell Judah, the Ammonites also suffered defeat (25:1-7; Jr 49:1-6). ***Rabbath:*** The capital of Ammon. In order to make his decision concerning who to strike first, Nebuchadnezzar consulted the diviners. When the decision was made to strike Ammon first, the Jewish exiles assumed that Judah and Jerusalem would be spared. But the suggestion of the diviners that Ammon should be taken first was considered false divination by the Babylonians, and thus they marched on Jerusalem instead. ***Look at the liver:*** This was a futile action on the part of the diviners in their attempt to foretell the future. We are not told how the soothsayers performed this action.

21:24-27 Zedekiah's rebellion was remembered by Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was thus determined to punish Jerusalem for the rebellion that was led by Zedekiah. ***Remove the turban and take off the crown:*** Ezekiel prophesied that Zedekiah take off the symbol of kingship. Since he had been appointed king by Babylon, and not anointed by God, he had no right to be the king of Israel. The prophecy here tells him to get off the throne, for he had no right to reign. ***Until He comes whose right it is:*** The only one who would have a right to reign as king of God's people would be the Messiah who was to come (See comments Lk 1:31-33).

21:28-32 The extent of the destruction of Ammon was that the Ammonite nation was terminated. After the destruction by the Babylonians, it went out of existence, never to be restored again as a nation under the sanction and purpose of God.

Chapter 22

22:1-16 In this first of three pronouncements of judgment upon the city of Jerusalem, the sins of the city are named. It was a city of blood because within it innocent people died without just cause. The righteous were even subjected to the intimidation of the wicked leaders at the time the city was under siege. They would not allow anyone to leave the city, and thus innocent people died from famine and pestilence. Ezekiel pronounced judgment on the kings who remained leaders through murder and oppression. They had no respect for their fathers and mothers. They oppressed the fatherless and widows. They did not spiritually lead the people. The leaders had no moral character, and thus led the people to moral degradation. In all their dealings, the leaders were corrupt and immoral. They served for their own existence, subjecting the people in order to satisfy their own greed and thirst for power. ***Consume your filthiness out of you:*** God would send the people into captivity until those of their culture of wickedness had died. Once they came to their moral senses in captivity, then they would understand that all the calamity through which they were taken was the work of God to cleanse them of their apostate behavior.

22:17-22 In this second pronouncement of judgment, Ezekiel portrayed the nation as metal melted down to dross. The wickedness of the people had stirred up the anger of God, which anger was poured out in wrath upon the city in order to consume it.

22:23-31 This third pronouncement of judgment upon the city focused on the prophets, priests and princes who had led the people in a conspiracy against God. The end of the tragedy was that God sought for someone who could intercede for the city, but no one could be found. And since He could find no one to intercede for the city, He had to continue with His plan to destroy the city. If one person could have been found to intercede for the people, then God would have turned His wrath from the city (Compare Gn 18). ***Her priests:*** The priests were so ignorant of the law of God that they did not know the difference between right and wrong according to the law. They did not know what was clean or unclean. ***Her princes:*** The kings and leaders exploited the people, seeking gain through any means. ***Her prophets:*** The false prophets claimed to speak for God. They claimed to have either a vision or dream. But their visions or dreams were the product of their own imaginations. ***The people:*** The population turned on itself, neighbor against neighbor. ***Stand in the gap:*** Only one person could have stood in the gap between God and man, and subsequently through prayer turn the wrath of God away from the city. But not one righteous person was found.

Chapter 23

23:1-10 This oracle came around 590 B.C. (20:1), after the northern kingdom of Israel, represented by Samaria (Aholah), her capital, had already gone into Assyrian captivity. The southern kingdom, represented by Jerusalem (Aholibah), would go into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., about four years from the date of this prophecy. The northern kingdom had committed spiritual harlotry by signing alliances with foreign nations throughout her history. She was eventually taken into captivity by one with whom she had signed an alliance. She went into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. ***From the time in Egypt:*** While the Israelites were in Egyptian captivity, they were greatly affected by the idolatry of the Egyptians. Though their desire for idols subsided in the years of their early history, Solomon reintroduced idolatry through his trade deals and foreign wives. His influence over the people throughout history was perpetuated to the point that it led to their captivity by the Assyrians.

23:11-21 In reference to their digression into idolatry, Judah became worse than her northern sister. She made an alliance with the Babylonians, into whose hands she would eventually be given in captivity (See 2 Kg 20:12-21; 24:1). Because the Israelites were located in the major trade route of the ancient world (Palestine), she continually had dealings with nations to the north who traded with Egypt and the northern nations of Africa. The temptation was too great to remain culturally separate from these nations, for traders passed through Palestine on a continual basis. Instead of influencing the traders for good, and teaching them of the one true and living God, she was influenced to accept their national gods in order to establish trade relationships. Solomon began this economic culture of idols and trade, and the kings after him simply continued making alliances with foreign nations, which nations (Assyria and Babylonia) eventually took control of the trade route. The captivities of the Israelites, therefore, was more than the mere conquest of one people over another. The captivities were national conquests of the major trade route of the ancient world. After the Babylonians, came the Medo-Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans. All these empires wanted to maintain control of the Palestinian trade route in order to control the trade of the Near East.

23:22-31 ***Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa ... all the Assyrians:*** The Babylonians were able to muster the allegiance of mercenary peoples in order to conquer the land of Palestine. Though the Babylonians had overthrown Nineveh in 612 B.C., and finalized the Assyrian Empire at the battle of Carchemish in 609 B.C., the Assyrians were assimilated into the Babylonian war machine. ***Make your lewdness and your harlotry ... to cease:*** The Jews' involving themselves in

a culture of idolatrous worship, and all that it entailed, would eventually be forsaken. Their captivity would see the end of the generation of idolaters who generated the wrath of God against them. A new generation would be born in captivity and would not follow after the idolatry of their fathers. ***Cup:*** The cup was symbolic of suffering. As the northern kingdom suffered captivity, so would the southern kingdom.

23:32-35 Judah became arrogant when her northern sister was taken into captivity. Her arrogance led her to go further into apostasy. She would drink all the cup that was handed to her northern sister, and thus suffer the horrors that came with Nebuchadnezzar's 30-month siege against Jerusalem that finally fell in 586 B.C.

23:36-49 ***To pass them through the fire:*** Their religious behavior was void of righteousness. That which would have been morally common sense, was absent from their religious behavior, even to the point of offering their children as sacrifices to the gods they had created after their own imagination. It was to this moral level of degradation that God allowed them to go before He destroyed them with famine, pestilence, the sword, or death during the captivity. ***They have sent for men:*** Both Samaria and Jerusalem sent for foreigners with whom they could commit spiritual adultery through the making of alliances. Their alliances with their lovers eventually led to their ruin. God allowed their lovers to conquer their territories, and thus bring to an end Israel's control of the land of Palestine for the remainder of her history as a nation. Israel ended when she was dissolved into the spiritual kingdom of Christ (Gl 3:26-29). Even when the Israelites were allowed to return to the land after the Babylonian captivity, it was controlled by the Medo-Persian Empire. Thus the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. resulted in an irrevocable loss of Israel's autonomy in the promised land. In every way, therefore, they had to bear the sins of their past by giving up their possession of the land.

Chapter 24
PROPHECY BEFORE THE FALL

24:1-14 This pronouncement came in January, 588 B.C., about two and a half years after the previous oracle. This was the date that Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city of Jerusalem (See 2 Kg 25:1; Jr 52:4). What Ezekiel was commanded to do here was interpreted in verses 6-14. The pot symbolized the city of Jerusalem, and the rebellious house of Israel was in the pot for cooking. Because the people within the city did not surrender to the Babylonians, they would suffer the 30-month siege of the city. The righteous and unrighteous would suffer together. Because the city was surrounded, no one would be able to escape the siege. Some did escape to the Babylonians, but they had to secretly leave the city in order to give themselves over to the Babylonians. ***Her blood is in the midst of her:*** Murderers were in Jerusalem, as well as all those who had defiled every symbol that represented the righteousness of God. The city was sealed up by the Babylonian army, and made ready for the devastation of famine and pestilence that would ravage the population before it finally fell. ***Let the bones be burned:*** Once the flesh was cooked well, Ezekiel was to pour out the broth and burn even the bones. He was also to empty the pot and set it directly on the fire in order that the bronze might burn red hot. It was to be melted with its rust. The city was to be thoroughly cleansed of all sin, which meant that all its inhabitants were to be killed or taken away into captivity. Jerusalem was to cease as a city.

24:15-27 God took Ezekiel's wife as His people were taken from Him by their idol gods. When Ezekiel's wife died, God commanded Ezekiel not to mourn her death, for her death was a prophecy of the death of their sons and daughters in the city of Jerusalem. When his wife died, Ezekiel was to carry on with his work. Doing so stirred the people to inquire concerning the meaning of his actions. When the people eventually received news that Jerusalem had fallen, Ezekiel instructed them that they were not to mourn for the city, for its fall was the plan of God. Other than prophesying concerning the judgment of God against the nations, Ezekiel was to keep silent until he heard word that the city had fallen. This came about two years later (33:21). When the city had fallen, the event would be a sign that all prophecies concerning its fall would have come to pass. All the true prophets of God would have been confirmed true, and all false prophets judged to be false.

Prophecies Against The Nations
(25:1 – 32:32)

Outline: (1) Prophecy against Ammon (25:1-7), (2) Prophecy against Moab (25:8-11), (3) Prophecy against Edom (25:12-14), (4) Prophecy against Philistia (25:15-17), (5) Prophecy against Tyre and Sidon (26:1 – 28:26), (6) Prophecy against Egypt (29:1 – 32:32)

Chapter 25
PROPHECY AGAINST AMMON

The time for these prophecies against the nations that surrounded Israel came before the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem. All these nations were related in some way to Israel through Abraham. Throughout their history, they seem to have manifested their envy that Israel was considered the chosen people of God, and not their forefathers from whom they originated. Because they possibly dealt in an envious manner toward their relative, Israel, they rejoiced when she was humbled through destruction and captivity.

25:1-7 When Nebuchadnezzar finally brought an end to Judah through the destruction of Jerusalem, Ammon rejoiced. Ammon rejoiced when the temple was defiled and the land laid waste. She possibly saw Judah's demise as revenge for what had formerly transpired when Israel conquered her many years before when the Jews were entering the promised land (See Jg 10:9 – 11:40). When the northern kingdom of Israel fell in 722/21 B.C., the Ammonites reclaimed the territory that was formerly taken from them (Jr 49:1). She then attacked the southern kingdom of Judah in 600 B.C. Because of her resentment and evil actions toward Judah, the judgment that would be brought on her would result in her termination from history as a nation. The Ammonites would be assimilated into the world powers that would control the Near East, and thus go out of existence as a nation of people. Their sin resulted in their termination.

PROPHECY AGAINST MOAB

25:8-11 Israel was arrogant in the fact that she was the chosen of God. When she went into apostasy by adopting the idol gods of her neighbors, then her neighbors said that she was no different than them. When Jerusalem fell, and the temple was destroyed, the nations mocked Israel, reaffirming their claim that she too was only another nation of the world like them. Since Israel could no longer claim to have the special protection of her God, then she could no longer claim to be the special people of God.

PROPHECY AGAINST EDOM

25:12-14 From the day that Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, the Edomites were antagonistic against Israel. These descendants of Esau seemed never to forgive Abraham for allowing their forefather to be cast out of his camp (Gn 35:22 – 36:43). Their hatred of Israel led them to work against God's plan through Israel. Because of their work against the plan of God, they brought judgment on themselves, which judgment meant their extinction from history (See comments Ob; see also Ez 35:1 – 36:15). Their hatred went so far as to murder the Israelites who escaped from Jerusalem when it was under siege by the Babylonians.

PROPHECY AGAINST PHILISTIA

25:15-17 From the time Joshua led the Israelites into the land of promise, the Philistines were the continual antagonist against Israel's possession of the land (Jg 3:31; 14:1-16; 1 Sm 4:1-6; 2 Ch 26:6,7). Because the Israelites had throughout their history defeated the Philistines on many occasions, they harbored an ongoing hatred of Israel. When Israel fell, they rejoiced over her demise. Because of their actions against Israel, God's prophets pronounced their certain demise and extinction from history (See Is 14:29-32; Jr 25:20; Am 1:6-8). ***Cherethims:*** This was another name for the Philistines. This name was possibly given to the Philistines before the Israelites arrived in Palestine, for they had migrated from Crete, or Caphtor (See Dt 2:23; Jr 47:4; Am 9:7).

Chapter 26

PROPHECY AGAINST TYRE AND SIDON

26:1-14 Tyre and Sidon were prominent gateway seaport cities. Palestine, and the nations immediately east of Palestine, were able to trade with all the Mediterranean port cities through the ports of these two cities. ***I will be filled now:*** The Israelites evidently functioned as "customs control" when nations as Syria, Ammon and Moab to her north, and cities to the east and south, traded with the coastal cities of the Mediterranean Sea (See 27:5-25). But when Judah fell, the traders had free access to these nations. However, such was not to be for God wanted to destroy both Tyre and Sidon in order to desolate the land of Palestine and punish those neighboring nations of Israel who sought her demise. Because of their strategic location and trade with many nations, the people followed after the pride of their King Ithobaal II (28:12). They lifted themselves up, but they would be brought down. According to Josephus, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years. Once he conquered the city, the port came under Babylonian control, but never functioned as it did prior to the Babylonian destruction. Years later Alexander the Great also besieged the city. During the siege by the Greeks, a remnant of the people of Tyre fled from Alexander to a small island off the coast of the mainland city. In order to completely devastate the city, however, the army of Alexander built a causeway with the remains of the coastland city by throwing stones into the sea. A causeway was thus made in order to access the small island. The city was never rebuilt in ancient times to its former glory that it enjoyed prior to its destruction by the Babylonians.

26:15-21 ***Troubled by your departure:*** The kings of all the Mediterranean coastal nations would lament the fall of Tyre simply because they would lose a very strategic trade port to the Near East nations. They would be economically devastated by the demise of a great amount of trade. ***Descend into the Pit:*** Not only would the city fall, but the unrighteous would be brought down to Sheol. What is symbolized in verse 20 is not a location of the dead, but a metaphorical understanding in reference to the beliefs of the people. Shrines and temples were built on high places because of the peoples' belief that God could be better accessed on hills and mountains. The opposite of such locations would be the depths of the earth. This was the location, therefore, where it was believed that demons existed.

Chapter 27

27:1-36 Judgment upon Tyre was indirect judgment upon all those nations who traded through her ports. Her trading partners extended even to the ports of Spain and all northern Africa. The Near East trade that went through the port city of Tyre is often ignored when dealing with the judgment of God upon the nation of Israel. When Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, God gave to the Israelites all the territory that extended into the land of the Hittites to the north (modern-day Turkey), to the border with Egypt to the south. He even gave them the territory to the east of the Jordan River when they defeated the Ammonites. The territory that He gave them was the heart of all the Near East trade. If they would have remained faithful to Him, they would have developed into one of the most glorious empires of the world with the opportunity to influence the world for God. One wonders what the world would have been like today if they had remained faithful to God. They had the opportunity, but they foolishly turned their back on God. The emphasis on the greatness of Tyre in this chapter manifests just a portion of the international trade and opportunity that Israel could have had if she would have conquered all the land that God gave her, and then remained faithful to Him. Just having this one city within her border would have given her the opportunity to preach the name of God throughout all nations of the world. As Bible historians, therefore, we see in the words of this prophecy concerning the fall of Tyre the fall of a great opportunity for Israel that they could have had if they would have controlled their rebellious attitude and stiffnecked behavior. There is thus more to the words of this prophecy against Tyre than a condemnation of the city. We must not forget that the city and port could have

belonged to the people of God, who in turn could have had a great impact on the world through their monotheistic beliefs.

Chapter 28

28:1-10 ***"I am a god":*** Any man on earth who would set himself up as one to be worshiped, has declared his own doom (See comments At 12:18-23). Only God is to be worshiped, for it was He who created all things. The city of Tyre, therefore, was to pay the price for the arrogance of their king. We would assume, however, that they would not have been punished because of their innocence in this matter. They evidently accepted him as a god, and thus gave him worship. ***Wiser than Daniel:*** Daniel was but a man, but wiser than the king of Tyre. This statement was a mockery of the king for his arrogant presumption that he would be as wise as God. If the king claimed to be a god, then he would have to be omniscient, and thus no secret could be hidden from him. ***Acquired riches:*** The king's self-deception was that his great acquisition of treasures led him to believe that he was as wise as Solomon. But he went one step further. He thought he was as wise as a god. His worldly wisdom to acquire riches was not a qualification for claiming to be a god. So because he claimed to be God, God would send a ruthless army against him in order to bring him down. And once he was brought down, he was asked if he would still claim to be a god.

28:11-19 God had set the king of Tyre in his position as the king (Compare comments Rm 13:1-4). But because of his sin, God would bring him down. He was a leader that God raised up in order to accomplish His purpose among His people. But when the sin of materialism took control of his life, he was taken out by God. ***The people will be astonished:*** The people would actually learn a lesson from the fall of the king of Tyre. He exalted himself among the people as a god. However, he was brought down. Though they may not have recognized that it was God who brought him down, they certainly learned that one as the great king of Tyre could be no god, for he was brought down by another king who was more powerful than he.

28:20-26 Since Tyre and Sidon were sister cities, they were considered in prophecy together. What affected one, affected the other (See Is 23:1,2; Mk 7:24-26; At 12:20). Ezekiel and the other prophets spoke against both Tyre and Sidon. They proclaimed that they would fall. Once they fell, God's prophets were proved to be sent from God, who only can know the future. ***Prickling brier:*** The nations that surrounded Israel continually plagued them throughout their history. But this would come to an end, for these nations would be terminated by God. This was done when the Medo-Persian Empire assumed control of all the former possessions of the Assyrians and Babylonians. When God brought His people back to the land of Palestine, the people who were already in the land, and the territory of all neighboring nations, were under the authority of the Medo-Persian Empire. They could not rise up against the returned remnant of Israel, lest they be seen as rising up against the Medo-Persian authority that was in control of all Palestine and surrounding regions. For this reason, the Jews dwelt safely in the land when they returned, for they were under the protection of the Medo-Persians (See comments Er & Ne). ***Sanctified in them:*** God would be set apart in their minds as the only true and living God.

Chapter 29
PROPHECY AGAINST EGYPT

29:1-7 This oracle of Ezekiel was delivered during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem. It is specifically directed toward the Pharaoh of Egypt. Because the Pharaohs of Egypt thought that they were the descendants of the gods, they were arrogant and pompous. ***My river:*** The Nile River was the source of food for Egypt, and thus the foundation of their existence. The crops of Egypt were planted along the silted banks of the Nile, which made it possible for Egypt to have food even in the worst of famines. ***Great monster:*** Pharaoh wallowed in the wealth of the Nile. But God would bring him up from the Nile as a fish caught on a hook. As scales are attached to the fish, the people would cling to the big fish Pharaoh, which would result in all of them being cast into the wilderness. ***Not be gathered and buried:*** It was abhorrent to the Egyptian not to be buried, especially for the Pharaoh who would enjoy a great entombment at the time of his death. Because they would not be buried, animals and birds would eat their discarded bodies. ***Staff made of reed:*** Israel had leaned on Egypt in the past for help, but Egypt crumbled as a staff that was made of flimsy reeds.

29:8-12 Egypt would be laid waste by the Babylonians from the small town of Migdol in the north (See Ex 14:2; Nm 33:7), and to Syene (modern-day Aswan) in the south. This was the totality of the heart of Egypt. ***Forty years:*** This time may be symbolic, taken from Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Nm 14:33; Ps 95:10). It would refer to the time when the Medo-Persian Empire extended into Egypt from 525 to 487 B.C. ***I will scatter the Egyptians:*** As Israel was scattered among the nations, so would the Egyptians be scattered during their period in the wilderness.

29:13-16 ***I will gather the Egyptians:*** Only the Egyptians were promised to be restored to their land. All the other nations against whom prophecies were made, were destined for termination. God seems to make this promise to the Egyptians because they were the nation that housed His people during their years of development as a nation. ***A lowly kingdom:*** Though the Egyptians would emerge as a nation, they would not be the dominant and glorious nation that they were in their former years. ***No longer be the confidence of ... Israel:*** In her apostasy, Israel turned to Egypt for help. But Egypt would never again be a strong nation to which Israel would be tempted to again turn for help.

29:17-21 Nebuchadnezzar laid siege against Tyre for thirteen years. However, he took little spoil from the city. It was at this time in history that God was using the Babylonian Empire to bring judgment on Assyria for arrogantly striking against the people of God in the northern kingdom, and then against Judah. In order that the Babylonian army continue to be God's proxy judgment against the apostate people of God, they needed to survive. For this reason, therefore, God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to conquer Egypt. ***The horn of the house of Israel:*** Reference here could be to the time when

God would open Ezekiel's mouth once again to speak concerning Israel and her future. At this time his mouth was closed, for he could speak only concerning the destiny of the nations around Israel. But when God once again allowed him to speak, he would speak of the restoration of Israel, as well as the coming of the Messiah.

Chapter 30

30:1-9 ***The day of the Lord:*** In prophecy, this phrase meant that judgment and destruction were coming. The day of the Lord meant deliverance of the righteous by the destruction of the wicked (See comments 2 Pt 3). In this historical context, Egypt and all nations who were in alliance with her, were to suffer the destruction that would be coming from the Babylonian Empire. When Egypt and its alliance countries fell to the Babylonians, the neighboring Ethiopians to the south of Egypt, would also suffer.

30:10-12 ***I will make the rivers dry:*** The Nile River would not completely dry up, but it would be so low that the irrigation canals would not feed through to the crops. However, most of the small rivers that dispersed from the mouth of the Nile in the land of Goshen would dry up.

30:13-19 The cities herein mentioned are the principal cities throughout Egypt. Memphis was the capital of Lower Egypt (the northern region) and Pathros was the capital of Upper Egypt (the southern region). ***No:*** Thebes. ***Aven:*** Heliopolis. ***Pi-beseth:*** Bubastis. ***Tehaphnehes:*** Or, Tahpanhes.

30:20-26 The date of this oracle against Pharaoh was 586 B.C., the year that Jerusalem fell. While Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem, the Egyptians came up to help Judah. But Nebuchadnezzar temporarily left his siege of Jerusalem, and engaged the Egyptians, whom he defeated and sent back to Egypt. Then again in 582/81 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar took his army into Egypt and ravaged the land. The prophecy here made by Ezekiel possibly refers to the 582/81 B.C. attack of Nebuchadnezzar against Egypt.

Chapter 31

31:1-9 This oracle is dated about two months after the previous oracle (30:20). The prophecy here was directed to Pharaoh. However, Assyria is used to illustrate that no matter how great a kingdom might be, it can be brought down by God. ***Cedar:*** In order to exemplify the greatness of the Assyrian Empire, it was compared to a great cedar of Lebanon. The Assyrian Empire became extensive throughout the Near East. Other nations founded their security on its existence, trusting that it would never fall. Through its far reaching governance of the Near East, nations could trade in peace. The kings of the Empire were arrogant because of the greatness of the kingdom. God had raised up this empire for the purpose of using it to discipline His people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

31:10-14 Though the Assyrian Empire was so great, the Babylonian Empire overcame it. Assyria was brought down. And when it was brought down, all those who depended on her existence came down with her. ***The most ruthless of the nations:*** The Babylonian army was composed of a coalition of forces that were of a warrior culture. They existed off the plunder of other nations. Their survival, therefore, depended on their plunder of those cities they conquered. The Assyrians could not stand against such an army. They were thus brought down to the pit of death.

31:15-18 Assyria was brought down. And when it fell, it fell as a great tree to the ground, causing a tremor throughout the nations that depended on her existence. Such would be the fate of Egypt. Egypt was never the extensive empire that Assyria was. And since Assyria was brought down by the Babylonians, Ezekiel wanted the Egyptians to know that they did not have a chance. They too would come crumbling down in order to find their place among the uncircumcised.

Chapter 32

32:1-10 This oracle against Pharaoh was delivered in March 585 B.C. It was delivered a year and nine months after the oracle of 31:1. This prophecy is specifically against Pharaoh. He made himself fierce like a lion, and like a great monster—possibly a reference to a whale—among the nations. ***Spread out My net:*** No matter how fierce and large Pharaoh presumed himself to be, he would be caught and entangled in the net of God (See 29:3-5). Pharaoh would be brought out of his protective waters, and laid out on the ground. The wild birds and beasts would then come and devour his flesh. He would not be allowed the honorable burial that was traditionally given to Pharaohs. ***I will cover the heavens:*** When Pharaoh fell, all his governors, princes and leaders of the land fell with him. Their influence was darkened. They were as stars and the moon that no longer reflected light. When Pharaoh (the sun) was covered, the Egyptian leaders (the moon), could no longer reflect the influence of the Pharaoh throughout the land. ***Trouble the hearts of many people:*** When Pharaoh was brought down, all those nations that depended on Egypt were troubled. They would see that if Egypt could not stand against the invasion of the Babylonians, then surely they could not stand.

32:11-16 Death and destruction would not stop with Pharaoh. The Babylonians would strike the population of Egypt. Since God meant for the Babylonian army to be replenished with the spoil they would take from Egypt, the treasures of the country would be taken. The animals and crops would be taken for food. The country would be plundered of its goods, and thus the people would be left with nothing to eat. Those who fled into the desert would starve.

32:17-32 Though the Egyptians considered themselves a distinct people from the rest of the Gentile nations, they would go down to death and join all the uncircumcised in Sheol. Pharaoh, and all his people, would be laid in the grave among all the other nations. ***Sheol:*** All the spirits of the dead would go to the realm of departed spirits. This is not the eternal punishment, but the abode of the dead. ***Asshur:*** Or, Assyria. All the nations that were mentioned in this context were formidable military states. They all fell to succeeding nations, and thus Egypt would be no different. Meshech and Tubal were remnants of the Hittites who dwelt north of Palestine. Though all these nations were a terror to the populations of the Near East, they were all gone, buried with their populations. The grave

silenced their terror, and the world continued on a better place without them. Pharaoh would suffer the same disgrace and the world would carry on.

Restoration And Reconstruction
(33:1 – 48:35)

Outline: (1) Return of the glory of the Lord (33:1 – 39:29), (2) Restoration of worship and civic life (40:1 – 48:35)

Chapter 33
RETURN OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Beginning with this chapter, and extending throughout the remainder of the book, the primary focus of the prophet is on hope for the future. Except for a brief interjection of prophecy in reference to the nations (36:7; ch 38 & 39), the pronouncements of these final chapters are to the people of God.

33:1-9 ***Watchman:*** The prophets of the Old Testament were the watchmen of God (3:16-21; Is 21:6; Jr 6:17; Hk 2:1). They were called in order to call Israel back to God. Their work was to warn the wicked, that they turn from their wicked ways. The Major and Minor Prophets existed for the purpose of warning God's people during the era of apostasy that they should repent, and return to God. ***Wicked man:*** In this context, Ezekiel turned from the sins of the nation to the sins of the individual. Though the nation had to suffer the calamity of destruction and captivity, the individual would be saved through individual repentance and obedience of God's law.

33:10,11 ***How should he then live:*** The people knew that they had to pay for their sinful ways. Their question was how could they survive the present calamity. The answer was that they had to repent. They had to turn from their idolatrous beliefs and behavior and return to the law of God.

33:12-16 ***Righteousness ... will not deliver:*** This context of teaching argues against the concept that one is once saved, and then he is always saved before God. The word "if" places a condition on one's salvation. If one does not continue in his obedience to the word of God, then he will fall from his state of salvation (See 1 Co 15:2). It is true that our works (righteousness) do not guarantee our salvation. We are saved by grace, regardless of the works that we do in response to God's grace (See comments 2 Co 4:15). However, if one claims to be righteous because of his works, and then works wickedness, then God's grace will not cover his wicked behavior. If the wicked man turns from his wicked ways, then he has thus changed his eternal destiny. He will be saved. His eternal destiny, therefore, is determined by his obedience to the will of God.

33:17-20 ***Their way is not fair:*** In order that the justice of God stand unchallenged, each free-moral individual must be held accountable for his own sins. His eternal destiny cannot be unconditionally determined by God before he is born. God's justice stands because each person will be held accountable for his own sins (See comments 2 Co 5:10). Because of the many exhortations throughout the Bible in reference to the teaching of this context—that one must continue to be faithful—individual responsibility for one's behavior is necessary in order that God stand just in judgment (See Mt 10:22; Cl 1:23; Hb 3:6; 2 Pt 1:10).

33:21,22 ***One who had escaped:*** The normal journey from Jerusalem to Chebar would have taken over three months (See Er 7:9). Because of the detention of the captives after the fall of the city in 586 B.C., we would assume that the journey of this refugee took over six months. Ezekiel's mouth had been closed by God in giving any further oracles concerning the city after the statements of 24:26,27. During the interim period, he spoke only of the nations (chs 25 – 32). But now God opened his mouth and he could speak concerning the future of Israel.

33:23-29 Many residents of Jerusalem had scattered throughout the land during Nebuchadnezzar's 30-month siege of the city. They were reasoning that if God had given the land to one man, Abraham, then certainly they should be granted the land as a group. In their reasoning, however, they had forgotten their idolatrous beliefs and behavior that had led to their loss of the land. In this oracle, God reminded them of their sinful ways that led to their loss of the land. ***Eat with blood:*** They ate blood in reference to idol worship (See At 15:20). ***Shed blood:*** They had offered their children as sacrifices to their idol gods. ***Stand upon your sword:*** They trusted in their own military strength, and not in God. They lived by plunder and murder. ***Defiles his neighbor's wife:*** They were an immoral culture. ***Fall by the sword:*** Those who remained in the land after the destruction of Jerusalem would be hunted down and killed by the Babylonian army.

33:30-33 ***They will not do them:*** They came to hear the word of God from the preacher, but they would not take action. They were hearers of the word, but not doers (See comments Js 2:14-26). ***A prophet ... among them:*** When Ezekiel's prophecies were fulfilled, he was then confirmed without doubt to be a prophet of God.

Chapter 34

34:1-6 This is a picture of a self-centered leadership that was concerned only with their own well-being. ***Shepherds:*** The shepherds in this context were the kings, princes, priests and elders of Israel. When Jerusalem fell, the people of God were scattered as captives, not only throughout the land of Palestine, but also throughout the Babylonian Empire. They were scattered because their leaders had led them into the apostasy of idolatry. In the preceding chapter, the leaders simply wanted to come before Ezekiel and hear a word from the prophet. They should have been inquiring of the Lord as to how they could gather the scattered flock of God. ***You have dominated them:*** Leaders who are concerned for their own well-being, and do not lead by service and example, control by domination. The less they care for the flock, the greater the severity of their domination in order to maintain their base of support and control over the people. They thus use the sheep as an opportunity to satisfy their own thirst for power and control. These shepherds failed to serve the flock of God. God's shepherds should lead by service, not command (Compare comments Mk 10:35-45; 1 Pt 5:1-4).

34:7-10 ***No shepherd ... search for My flock:*** A shepherd is no shepherd at all if he has his own interest at heart. Since in the context the shepherds were the civil and religious leaders

of the people, then in this statement, God said He would take them away. He would take away any further earthly kings in Israel. The emphasis of what God states in this context is that He will restore His original plan for His people, that He only would be their king, reigning over them from heaven. His kingship would continue with the coming King, the Messiah, who would reign over the people from heaven (Lk 1:31-33; At 2:21-36).

34:11-16 God would seek out His sheep from among the nations to which they had been taken into captivity. Once they were gathered, He would bring them again into their land that He had given them. This would happen when the Medo-Persian Empire, under the kingship of Cyrus, would allow the captives to return to their land in 536 B.C. (See comments Er & Ne). ***Destroy the fat and the strong:*** The wicked kings and leaders of former Israel would be taken away. God would never again allow His people to have royal authorities on earth to dominate His people. All authority would remain in heaven where it has always existed (See comments Mt 28:18).

34:17-19 ***Male goats:*** God would take away those who sought to dominate among the flock. These had formerly consumed the wealth of the land for their own selfish ends. They had no consideration for the people, and thus seized and maintained control of the people for the purpose of maintaining their own life-styles. When religious leaders take advantage of the people in order to guarantee their own life-style, they have stolen the flock of God.

34:20-22 ***Fat sheep:*** One was determined to be a self-seeking shepherd by his fatness that had resulted from his exploitation of the flock. ***Scattered them:*** Their behavior resulted in the scattering of the flock, for they led the people into idolatry. ***Save My flock:*** The ungodly and self-centered leaders of Israel had scattered the flock. God was now taking control of His flock and bringing them back to Him. No longer would He relinquish the flock to man in order that a king reign over them. Their rejection of Him had led to their destruction as a nation. His direction would lead them back to Him, and the Servant that was to come. They would regain their identity as a people, but not regain their independence as a nation in Palestine.

34:23-31 In order to understand the following context, the interpreter must conclude that the prophet is speaking of the Messiah. ***I will set up one shepherd over them:*** About 500 years before the time of this statement, Israel had cried out for a king on earth to rule over them. This system of governance led to their destruction, for the kings led in their idolatry. In this context, God was laying the foundation for restoring His sole kingship over His people. Through the captivity, their shepherds were taken away, and God was enthroned in their hearts. They were thus being prepared for a social paradigm shift that would last for another 500 years, which would bring them to King Jesus. God would set up His anointed King who would come from the lineage of David (See comments Ep 1:20-23). He would be the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11,14). ***Covenant of peace:*** See comments Jr 31:31-34. ***My hill:*** See comments Is 2:1-4. ***Showers of blessing:*** See At 3:19. ***Delivered them:*** God would deliver the captives from the bondage from which they could not deliver themselves. Their physical deliverance from Babylonian captivity would be typical of their deliverance from sin under the reign of the coming Servant. Once delivered, God's sheep would be in His protective hand. They would no longer fear those who could kill the body, but could not kill the soul (Compare Mt 10:28; Rv 21:4).

Chapter 35

35:1-9 ***Mount Seir:*** Edom. ***Stretch out My hand:*** God will influence the events of history in order to bring Edom to a close. ***Perpetual hatred:*** Being the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, the Edomites were continually the antagonists of Israel. From the time the Israelites came out of Egyptian captivity, to the time of their demise in the destruction of Jerusalem, the Edomites shed the blood of the Israelites (Nm 20:18). When Israel was coming to a close with the destruction of Jerusalem, the Edomites murdered many Israelites who escaped from the destruction of Jerusalem and fled toward Edom (See comments Ob). The Edomites rejoiced over the doom of Israel (See comments Ob 12). Because they showed no mercy for God's people, God would show no mercy toward them (Js 2:13). Edom as a nation would be terminated from history. They lived by the sword, and by the sword they would die. They were a cruel race of people. Herod the Great was an Edomite. Centuries after this prophecy of Ezekiel, Herod the Great, and those who descended from Herod, were designated by the Romans to reign over the Jews in Palestine immediately before the birth of Jesus. It was an effort by the Romans to humiliate the Jews who were living in Palestine at the time of the birth of Jesus.

35:10-15 Before the birth of Jacob and Esau, God told Rebekah that there were two nations in her womb (Gn 25:23). These two nations were the Edomites and Israelites. Israel followed after God, but the Edomites followed after false gods (Ob 2). They followed after the character of their father who was a profane person (Hb 12:16). ***I will do according to your anger:*** God would render to them that which they had done to others (Rm 12:19). ***Idumea:*** The Edomite nation. The Edomite nation would be made desolate, but the Jews would be restored to their land.

Chapter 36

36:1-7 Ezekiel had previously revealed condemnation of Mount Seir (35:3). Now he revealed blessing for the mountains of Israel. ***Mountains:*** The mountains stood for all the land. The land, including its mountains, valleys and rivers, was the sustenance of the nation of Israel. ***Have become our possession:*** The rest of the nations were land grabbers. Once the Israelites were taken from the land, countries as Edom grabbed the land. Because of the apostasy, God had taken His people from the land. However, when He took His people from their inheritance, He did not permanently give it over to other nations. The message of hope in this context was that the mountains and valleys would again be productive for the people of God.

36:8-15 ***Yield your fruit for My people:*** Though others took possession of the land, the promise was that the land

would again bring forth its fruit for the people of God. ***All the house of Israel:*** All twelve tribes would again enjoy their occupation of the land after King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire released the exiles in 536 B.C. The promise was that the cities of the land would be rebuilt, not just the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was important to the returnees, but it was not the only city that was rebuilt. In fact, according to the history that is given by Ezra and Nehemiah, the completion of the reconstruction of Jerusalem came after the rebuilding of many other cities in the land (See comments Er & Ne). There is no emphasis here on the rebuilding of the temple. ***I will multiply:*** Their prosperity in the land would be the sign that God was again with them. ***Bereave your nation of children:*** The other nations were saying that Israel bereaved herself of children. But this reproach of the nation would cease. Neither the people, nor the land, would bear the disgrace that was brought on the land through their apostasy. Through repentance and restoration, the Israelites would not become the victims of themselves. They would no longer be a reproach and a derision among the nations.

36:16-25 ***Woman in her impurity:*** When a woman was in her time of uncleanness, she was ceremonially impure (Lv 15:19-24). She was not to be touched by a man. When Israel was unclean with idol worship, God could not be close to her. He stood at a distance, and thus Satan had his opportunity to bring the ruthless nations of the world into her land for the purpose of destruction. ***According to their deeds:*** They sowed idolatry, and thus reaped the consequences of their sin. ***Profaned My holy name:*** Through their disobedience of His law, and their apostasy to idols, they brought mockery on the name of God. They caused the Gentile nations to accuse that the God of Israel was no different from their nationalistic gods that they had created after their own imaginations. ***I do this ... for My name's sake:*** Israel was only the opportunity through whom God planned to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. She was a flawed instrument. Nevertheless, in order to fulfill the promises that were made to the fathers, God restored Israel in order that she be identified as the heritage through whom the Savior came in fulfillment of the promises. ***I will sanctify My great name:*** God's name would be set apart, and thus manifested as a name of the God who exists above the minds of men who imagine their own gods. Through the restoration of His people to the land, therefore, God vindicated Himself to be the one true and living God (1 Sm 2:2). ***Sanctified in you before their eyes:*** When God was hallowed—set apart as the only God—then the nations would perceive that God was working in the restoration of Israel to their land. ***I will cleanse you:*** The people would be cleansed of their former sin because of their repentance of their idolatrous past. They would once again be His holy people (Lv 11:44; see 1 Pt 1:15,16).

36:26-32 ***A new heart:*** It would be a humbled heart. The purpose for the captivity of Israel was not simply punishment. If we do not understand that God was working to preserve a remnant of Israel in order to reestablish their identity for the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers, then we have missed the purpose for the captivity. In order to reestablish the identity of Israel, they had to be humbled through captivity. This was God putting a new heart and spirit within them. They had to voluntarily submit to His will, realizing that the only way out of captivity was through humble submission to Him. Once this was accomplished after the first generation of captives died, then through scribes as Ezra, with the leadership of spiritual men as Nehemiah, the humble and dedicated could be brought back into the land in order to prepare for the coming Messiah and Savior of the world. ***I will put My Spirit within you:*** This statement would possibly take these promises beyond the restoration of the captives to the land after the Babylonian captivity. The prophecy possibly looks to the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 (See comments). God poured out the Holy Spirit on the apostles in Acts 2, afterward filling His people with the Spirit upon their obedience to the gospel (At 2:38). However, the meaning would also be applicable from the time of the restoration to the coming of the Messiah, the time when God did not work through prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets. The Old Testament prophets were sent in order to call Israel back to God from their idolatry. But after the return, they would need no message as was given to them by the Old Testament prophets. They had the writings of the prophets to lead them to the Messiah. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit would not cease to work among God's people until the coming of the Messiah. He would work, but not as through prophets as the Major and Minor Old Testament prophets. He would work through chosen individuals as Simeon and Anna who would constantly remind the people that the Messiah was coming (See comments Lk 2:25,36). ***Cause you to walk in My statutes:*** God caused them to go through the cleansing of the captivity by humiliating the proud and arrogant idolaters. Since we would also interpret this to refer to a restoration of the people to return to God, then we would assume that the teaching of Jeremiah 31:31-34 would apply to this prophecy (See comments). The new heart would be the people's desire for God alone. ***My people ... your God:*** They would no longer give themselves over to false gods that they had created after their own imaginations. They would be restored to the one true God, and thus made to be His people. ***No more reproach of famine:*** Because they would give their hearts to God, God would not bring famine and pestilence on them in an effort to turn them from their sin. Thus the nations would never again mock them because their God had brought punishment on them for their sin. ***You will loathe yourselves:*** When restored to the land, the generation of Israelites that would return would look back to the idolatry of their fathers and loathe the behavior of their fathers. They would realize that their fathers brought independent Israel down because they ran after false gods.

36:33-38 ***Dwell in the cities ... ruins rebuilt:*** These promises caution us not to be too zealous to see Messianic prophecies within this context of our own future. Ezekiel focused the prophecy on the restoration of the people to the land of Palestine, rebuilding of the cities that had been destroyed by the invading forces, and then, cultivating the land. God would do all this as an evidence that He had worked a historical miracle. When a nation was conquered in ancient times and taken into

captivity, that was the end of the nation. However, in the case of Israel, God would resurrect His people out of captivity and reestablish them as a people within their land that had been given to them one thousand years before. When this would happen, then all the nations would perceive that the God of Israel was the true God of heaven.

Chapter 37

37:1-14 This was surely one of the most unsettling visual prophecies that Ezekiel experienced. The message of the illustration is clear. The power of God that was manifested in the resurrection of the bones proved to the people that if God could raise up these bones, and put life in them, then surely He could raise up His people out of their captivity and bring them again into their land. The northern kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity in 722/21 B.C. by the Assyrians. They had thus been in captivity over 140 years before this prophecy was made. They were many generations into their captivity, and thus settled in the lands of their captors. The captivity of the southern kingdom was finalized in 586 B.C. But in the prophecy, both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel would be restored to the land as one nation of twelve tribes. This historical miracle was accomplished when the Medo-Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians, and subsequently allowed all captives to return to their homelands that were under Medo-Persian control. The fact that this would eventually happen caused wonder at the time Ezekiel made the prophecy, but belief when it actually happened after the captivity.

37:15-23 What God commanded Ezekiel to do was to be done before all the people. It was to be done in a manner that would cause them to ask concerning the meaning of his actions. One stick represented the southern kingdom of Judah. The other used Joseph to stand for the northern kingdom of Israel. The sticks represented the two kingdoms coming together to be known as Israel, thus reestablishing the identity of Israel. The two kingdoms had been divided since the time immediately after the death of Solomon in 931 B.C. In 536 B.C., when the Medo-Persians allowed the Jews to return to their land, they would be united as one nation. After a period of almost 400 years of division, they would be brought together as one nation. Truly, it was a historical miracle of God to do such a thing.

37:24-28 There is certainly Messianic prophecy in this context. ***David My servant:*** This statement should be understood in view of its fulfillment in Jesus (See comments Lk 1:31-34; At 2:25-36). When a remnant of all twelve tribes was restored to the land after 539 B.C., the people also restored themselves to serve God as their only king. When Jesus came, the Father gave kingdom reign to the Son, who is now on the throne of David, reigning with all authority on earth from heaven (See comments Mt 28:18; Ep 1:21-23). ***My tabernacle:*** The tabernacle was located in the middle of the twelve tribes, and thus symbolized the presence of God among His people. The restoration of the tabernacle meant that God's presence would again be restored among His people. ***The Lord sanctifies Israel:*** The word "sanctify" here means to set apart. The thought is that the nations would, after the return of the captives, know that God had set apart His people. They were set apart for a specific purpose, that is, to bring the Son of God into the world as the Savior of all men.

Chapter 38

38:1-17 In chapters 38 & 39, apocalyptic prophecy is directed against Gog, of the land of Magog, who would fight against the people of God. Magog was a land to the north of Palestine. It included the regions of Meshech and Tubal. Some have assumed that Gog was Gyges (690-657 B.C.), king of Lydia in Asia Minor. Others have assumed that Gog was Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonian Empire. Some have suggested that reference is to Alexander the Great who took control of Palestine in the latter part of the 4th century. Still others have suggested that Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, is pictured, for he was the one who defiled Israel's sacrificial ceremonies in the early part of the 2nd century. However, if this context is apocalyptic, then the identity of Gog as a specific person is meaningless. He simply represents any force that would set himself or itself against the people of God. In view of the statements in 39:25-29, reference in the prophecy of these two chapters is to a time after the return of the captives from Babylonian captivity. The historical events look forward from the return to the coming of Jesus for His earthly ministry. This is an apocalyptic picture of any attack against God's people, and thus an encouragement to the returnees that they should never again fear a force that would destroy them. Others would come, but they would not defeat and scatter them as in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. ***Persia, Ethiopia and Libya:*** The prophecy was not only against Gog to the north of Palestine, but also against Persia to the east and Ethiopia and Libya to the south. All the nations surrounding Israel after the return are here warned not to trouble God's people, for He will bring judgment on them for harming His people. In the prophecy, Gog is representative of all enemies who would set themselves against Israel. Since Israel was restored to Palestine, the major trading route of the time, then the trading nations to the north and south of Israel are judged for their trouble that they would bring on God's people. It is difficult in the prophecy to determine exactly what nation would be represented by Gog. Though we may not understand the specific identity of Gog, and the country of Magog, the central meaning of the prophecy is clear. Gog would represent any king who would set himself against God's people. Magog would be representative of any kingdom that would seek to again assimilate God's people to the loss of their identity. All such kings and kingdoms would fail in their attempt to annihilate God's people. ***Sanctified through you:*** From the time of the return of the remnant to Palestine, which began in 539 B.C., to the time of the coming of Jesus, the land of Palestine was occupied by the Medo-Persians, Greeks and Romans. All these empires subdued the people of God. However, the attack of Gog, who represented all enemies of the people of God, would come to no avail. God's people would continue to maintain their identity as Jews until the coming of the Messiah. The fact that they maintained their identity as a culture of people, proved that God had set them apart

(sanctified) as His people through whom the Savior would be brought into the world. Every effort to terminate Israel from history, therefore, would fail.

38:18-23 The meaning of the prophecy was that God works for His people. In the case of any attack upon God's people, it is not stated that it would be His people who would take up arms and defend themselves against the attacker. It is stated that God would raise up all that would be necessary in order to thwart the plans of the attacker of His people. Thus God would work nation against nation in order that no nation ever again conquer His people. God would do all this in order to exalt His name among the nations.

Chapter 39

39:1-8 In this context the invading hostile force against God's people is described in detail. Regardless of the strength of forces against God, He, with a simple strike, dismantles their power. They are laid bare to be devoured by birds and beasts. Because the evil forces are so easily defeated, God's people conclude that only He could have been the source of their defeat (See comments Et).

39:9,10 Once God had brought the forces of evil down, then His people enjoyed the plunder that came from His deliverance. The extent of the victory was measured by the greatness of the spoil. The burning of the instruments of war for fuel took seven years, indicating complete destruction. It also symbolized that the enemies of God were great. However, they were overcome, regardless of their greatness and the number of weapons they used against the people of God.

39:11-16 Gog would be buried beyond the Jordan River (Sea). In order that the land be cleansed of all the dead bodies (36:18; Nm 31:19,20), a burial party would be employed for the purpose. If anyone identified a body, he was to mark the location for the burial party.

39:17-24 Though God used invading forces to punish Israel for their iniquity, He sacrificed (set apart) the invading forces in order to restore and spare His people. Assyria and Babylon were used as His proxy judgment against Israel. Assyria and Babylon, however, were conquered in order to restore the people to the land. Both Assyria and Babylon were evil forces against God's people. They arrogantly marched against Israel. Because of their arrogance, they were sacrificed for the benefit of the restoration of the people of God. Israel's deliverance from the evil forces that were against her is the occasion for belief among the nations. The nations thought it was the end of Israel when she was taken into captivity. But when the powers that took her into captivity were terminated, she was restored to her land. The historical miracle of her restoration became the opportunity for the honest historian to conclude that God was still working through His people.

39:25-29 This clear historical conclusion to the apocalyptic revelation of chapters 38 & 39 place the setting of the events at the time of Israel's captivity and restoration. Evil forces, symbolized by Gog and Magog, were brought against God's people. They were defeated by God once He had used them for His purpose. That purpose was concluded with the fall of the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. to the Medo-Persian Empire. Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian Empire, released the captives, and thus the faithful in Israel concluded that there was only one God. All their false gods and their false prophets had been proven wrong. God's prophets had been proven true. And thus, Israel knew that God caused both their captivity and return. They knew that God did what He said He would do if they forsook His covenant with them.

Chapter 40
RESTORATION OF WORSHIP & CIVIC LIFE

40:1-4 Ezekiel dates these prophecies in 572 B.C., fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Through visions, God wanted Ezekiel to see the restored Jerusalem. Thus the angel took Ezekiel to Jerusalem in order that he might see in vision what he would never see in life, for he would be dead by the time this vision was fulfilled. But to give hope to the captives, he was to tell what he saw in the vision.

40:5-49 ***Temple:*** The literal Hebrew word is "house," and thus can be translated "house" throughout the remainder of these chapters. Since the word "house" would metaphorically refer to the abiding place of God among His people, the physical symbol of the temple is used in prophecy to look forward to the house of God, the church (See 1 Tm 3:15). ***Cubit:*** About eighteen inches, or forty-five centimeters. ***Rod:*** About ten and a half feet, or a little over three meters. In this chapter the angel measured for the returnees the places for the restored sacrifices. When the return of the exiles happened, they would reinstitute sacrifices at the temple. Ezekiel is given this revelation in order to bring hope to the captives, reassuring them that though the temple had been destroyed, and the temple sacrifices terminated, they would in the years to come be reinstituted. The purpose for the revelation, therefore, was to bring encouragement for the discouraged captives in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It is difficult not to understand that these prophecies look beyond the physical restoration of Israel to the land of Palestine. In our hindsight of the establishment of the church, we can see the symbolism of the physical return of God's people to the land of Palestine as a metaphor that would refer to the establishment of the church in Acts 2.

Chapter 41

41:1-26 When reading this vision of a rebuilt temple, the Bible historian should keep in mind that a permanent temple for Israel was not in the original plan of God. When Israel was still at the foot of Mount Sinai, God, through Moses, gave instructions to Israel to build a tabernacle, or tent. The instructions were given in detail in order that Israel rebuild the tabernacle throughout their years in the land of promise. The tabernacle represented the presence of God among the people, and before it they were to assemble yearly. The tabernacle was to be moved among the people in order that no tribe be marginalized for the annual sacrifice during the day of atonement. However, when David became king, God gave a concession to him that he build a permanent structure to house the ark of the covenant. The concession was given because God knew that the northern ten tribes would pull away from Israel after

Solomon died. David was not allowed to build the temple, but Solomon, his son, did (1 Kg 6 – 7). Solomon's temple, therefore, marginalized the tribes to the north in Palestine. After Solomon's death Jeroboam built two altars, one in Bethel and the other in Dan (1 Kg 12:29). In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Solomon's temple. In the return of the remnant, God knew that the remnant would remain small in the land, and thus the rebuilding of the temple that is described in these chapters would suffice in providing a location to which the remnant could go for the annual sacrifices (See comments Er & Ne; Dt 12:21). The dimensions of the temple were different than those of Solomon's temple. This temple would exist until Herod the Great, who would later built what was referred to as Herod's Temple. This temple would be destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 and would never be rebuilt again. Because of Ezekiel's use of the word "forever," it may be that these instructions concerning the restoration of the sacrifices and rebuilding of the temple were symbolic of the spiritual temple of God, the church, that would come a little over 400 years after the last return of the captives to Palestine (See comments Er & Ne). At least we know that when Jesus came, no emphasis was placed on a continuation of the temple, for true worship would take place anywhere in the world, regardless of any physical structures (See comments Jn 4:23,24). In fact, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple structure that stood at the time of His ministry (See comments Mt 24). One of the great lessons that the Jews learned while in exile was that they could worship God without the presence of a temple structure. When they returned to rebuild the temple, therefore, they rebuilt it in order to unite the people around the sacrifices that were to be continued until the coming of the final sacrifice of the Son of God. While in captivity, it is believed that the Jews developed the idea of the synagogue. It is difficult to determine the origins of the synagogue, for the structure and function of the synagogue is found nowhere in the Old Testament. The Jews in captivity possibly built the synagogues for the purpose of solidifying their religious identity and culture throughout the world where they had been scattered. The concept of the synagogue thus came with the returnees in view of the fact that the rebuilt temple still marginalized those in Palestine who were too far from the temple (See comments Dt 12:21). Instead of a restoration of the mobile tabernacle, the Jews built synagogues throughout Palestine. Since they had built synagogues throughout the land of their captivity, the synagogue became a customary cultural and religious center of Israel. Every region, therefore, had a synagogue where sacrifices and teaching could take place. The synagogue thus became an opportunity for world evangelism in the early days of the church (At 17:2).

Chapter 42

42:1-20 Bible students should not be frustrated in interpreting the description of the temple that is given here. Because the Hebrew text varies in different places it is difficult in some places for the translator to bring over into another language the details of the Hebrew text. We do understand that these instructions were given through Ezekiel in order that the returnees after the Babylonian captivity would have some guidelines concerning the reconstruction of the temple. God knew that the temple had been so completely destroyed that the returnees would not have an idea as to how they should rebuild it. No guidelines or blueprint for building the temple were given for the construction of Solomon's temple. It is believed that Solomon built his temple after the model of Canaanite temples that were contemporary with Solomon. The returnees, however, were so repentant concerning their sin of idolatry, that they did not want in any way to rebuild the temple in a manner that would resemble or reflect the pattern of any pagan temples. In order to ease their minds, therefore, God revealed these basic instructions concerning the reconstruction in order that they be confident that the rebuilding was according to the will of God. Both Ezra and Nehemiah, who led returns and reconstruction after the Babylonian captivity, could follow the basic instructions given in these contexts in order to reaffirm to the people that the rebuilding was according to the plan and direction of God. The could rebuild the temple, but the land was under the control of Persia.

Chapter 43

43:1-12 The glory of the Lord fills all the earth (Is 6:3). God reveals His glory in order to manifest His approval and presence. The vision that Ezekiel saw on this occasion was similar to other occasions when he experienced the awesome presence of God (1:26-28; 8:1,2; 9:1-3). What was experienced on this occasion was the divine glory of God that was manifested in Ezekiel's vision of the temple. His glory came into the reconstructed temple from the east, signifying that God was still present with His people in captivity in Babylonian territory east of Palestine. He would be with them when they returned from captivity to rebuild the temple. When the people forsook idolatry, God came again into their presence while they were in captivity. God's presence, therefore, was not confined to a physical temple. His presence with His people exists wherever they are in the world. ***Threshold by My threshold:*** The awesomeness of God cannot be compared to or associated with man in his most pure state of being. In the past, the Israelites had built their houses joined to the temple. In the restored temple, they were not to defile the presence of God by doing such. Man cannot exalt himself to be compared with God as he had done with his idol gods that he had created after his own imagination. The awesomeness of the presence of God should be so revered that we would fear His presence and stand in awe of His glory. If men seek to personalize God to the point that they lose their fear of His awesomeness, they may be creating a god after their own imagination. When God was incarnate in the flesh of man, He had to empty Himself of His divine form in order for man to be able to stand in His presence (See Ph 2:5-8). God is personal to us through Jesus, but we should never forget that if we stood within the energy of His total glory we would be disintegrated into nothingness as in a nuclear blast. The One who created the millions of suns of the universe is millions of times greater in energy than all the universe combined together, for He is greater than that which He created.

43:13-27 In the vision, Ezekiel sees the restoration of the temple ceremonies that were conducted by the priests, the descendants of Zadok (vs 19; 44:15; 1 Kg 1:7,8). In connection with the offerings that were made, the priests were to sprinkle salt, signifying that the people would keep the covenant. The blood was sprinkled in order to sanctify (set apart) all that was reconstructed for the offering of the sacrifices. Before the people could continue with the altar and temple, they had to cleanse and dedicate it to the Lord. After the cleansing, the people could be accepted, and thus the sacrifices that they would make would be accepted.

Chapter 44

44:1-3 The reason the gate is shut is because the Lord entered the temple through the gate. And since it was shut, the Lord would never again leave His holy place among His people. ***Not be opened:*** In their former state of idolatry, their sun worship was reflected in their opening of the door in order to allow the rays of the rising sun to enter the temple. But in their restoration, this door is never to be opened. ***The prince:*** As a representative of the nation, the prince would eat alone in the sanctified gateway.

44:4-9 Since the temple had previously been defiled by idolatrous worship and idols, the Lord gives instructions as to who is permitted to enter the temple. From this time on, no uncircumcised person was to administer at the temple. Though non-Israelites previously administered at the temple (See Ja 9:24,27), this would be changed, for God did not want anyone who was uncircumcised in heart to appear before Him on behalf of the people. In this way, He sought to guard Israel from the influence of idolatrous people. Foreigners had introduced idolatrous worship into Israel, beginning with Solomon and his many foreign wives. And thus, in their future God would not allow this to happen again.

44:10-14 ***The Levities ... will bear their iniquity:*** In this case, the consequences of the sins of the fathers was passed on to the children. Because the Levites' fathers did not assume their spiritual leadership in order to direct the people according to the law of God, they were banned from doing again that which was assigned to them under the law. Thus the menial work that was previously assigned to foreigners before the temple, was given to the Levites. Because the Levitical priests succumbed to idolatry, they are here assigned to be the gate keepers, butchers and servants at the table. Since they had failed in their duties to keep the people from idolatry, they were stripped of their duties that were given to them under the law and given responsibility that did not entail spiritual leadership. When the return of the exiles eventually came after the Babylonian captivity, among the 40,000 exiles who returned, there were more than 4,000 priests. However, among this number there were only 74 Levites who wanted to leave their comfortable homes in Babylon in order to perform menial tasks at the temple worship (Er 2; compare Ps 84:10). Because there were so few Levites after the return, it was necessary that the Nethinim be called to perform the new duties of the Levites (Er 8:15-20).

44:15-27 ***Zadok:*** See 2 Sm 15:24-35; 1 Ch 15:11; 16:39. ***Clothed with linen garments:*** The symbolism of the garments was to manifest the ceremonial cleanliness of the people. Linen was considered more cleanly than wool, and thus the sanctification of the people throughout the land was to be symbolized by the best clothing that could be made by man. ***Neither ... shave their heads:*** This prohibition of shaving their heads, or not allowing their hair to grow long, was probably a restriction that again was in view of former idol worship. We must understand that the changes that are given in this context were given in response to the people's former behavior in reference to former idolatrous practices. In order to change the thinking of the people, God wanted to prohibit every behavioral characteristic that was associated with idolatrous worship (See comments 1 Co 8). ***They will teach:*** The priest was to be a teacher among the people (Dt 33:10). He was a judge in disputed matters (Dt 17:9; 19:17). ***Keep my laws:*** The priest was to keep the ceremonial laws in order to manifest the people's obedience to the moral laws of God. ***Sanctify My sabbaths:*** When the people kept the sabbaths, they were indicating their obedience to all the law of God. There was no cleansing power in the ceremonial laws, nor in keeping the sabbaths. But their obedience to the laws manifested their willingness to submit themselves to God.

44:28-31 ***Inheritance:*** See Dt 10:9. The priests were to be full-time in their service to the people. In order for them to do this, they were to be given the offerings of grain and animals, and everything that was dedicated to the Lord. They were to be given the firstfruits of the land, and all contributions that were necessary in order that they and their families be able to give themselves totally to the administration of the temple service and teaching of the people. ***Death:*** See Ex 22:31.

Chapter 45

45:1-5 When the Jews were restored to the land, there was to be an allotment of land for the sanctuary, for the priests, for the prince and for the city. The land was to be divided by allotment, thus assuring that there would be a fair division of the land. We would assume that the original records of the borders and inheritances of the land were destroyed when Jerusalem was burned by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. The instructions in this context, therefore, were a new beginning for the allotment of the land. ***Allotment to the Lord:*** The allotment for the Lord was first (See Mt 6:33). ***Open space:*** In order to maintain reverence for the allotment dedicated to the Lord, a space was given in order that no one build or go into this space. The Levites would be given a specific area for their dwelling that would facilitate their ministry at the temple.

45:6-12 ***Possession:*** Land ownership was a right throughout the history of Israel. Land ownership prevented dominant individuals from taking control of the land, and subsequently developing a totalitarian state and oppressing the poor. There were very few poor people in Israel for its first five hundred years of history in the land. Only when dominant individuals started ignoring the agricultural land laws of the individual did poverty become a problem. In order to guarantee a fair treatment of the poor, and to guarantee land ownership, the

people were to use fair scales and specific measurements in order to protect the individual citizen from the oppression of the greedy. The leaders were to deal fairly with the people, and not use their positions as an opportunity to oppress the people (See 34:1-31). Civil leaders who use their positions in order to oppress the people will suffer the judgment of God. ***Measure:*** The exact amounts of these measures are generally not known today.

45:13-20 The instructions concerning the restoration of the sacrificial ceremonies in reference to the leadership of the prince is the focus of this context. In the reestablishment of the ceremonies of the law, we must keep in mind that God was seeking to consolidate the faith of Israel in the land in preparation for the coming Messiah. Since the tabernacle was not reinstituted as the point of assembly for the annual sacrifices, the temple was rebuilt in order to be the point of reference for the sacrifices that pertained to all the people. The sanctuary was to be ceremonially cleansed twice a year, on the first and seventh month of the year. The giving of life, thus the offering of blood, was to be used to symbolize purification (See comments Hb 10:1-4).

45:21-25 There are differences between what God reveals in this context concerning the Passover and what was revealed in the law as stated in Deuteronomy 16. The feast of Weeks is not mentioned here, but this does not mean that it was not kept. The purpose of Deuteronomy was to restate principles and statutes of the law. However, this was not the purpose for the revelation here. The focus of Ezekiel was on the sin of the people and their forgiveness. Because the Jews were in a process of restoration from a total apostasy to idolatry, what Ezekiel reveals is meant to continue and maintain this process of restoration until the coming of the Messiah. At that time Israel would be assimilated into the worldwide family of God, the church (Gl 3:26-29). They had the complete directions concerning what God wanted as it was revealed in the law.

Chapter 46

46:1-11 The restored Israel never again had a God-anointed king to reign over them on earth. In the restored order of ceremonial practices, the "prince" (leader) in this context seems to be a reference to the high priest. At least in the context he is given the responsibilities that were associated with the high priest under the law. The prince was to provide the sacrifice from that which was given to him by the people. He was also to provide from his own sources. In making these provisions, he was considered the representative for the people in fulfilling the requirements of the sacrifices. In reference to the people passing through the temple courtyard, they were to enter one gate and pass through without returning to the gate of entrance. This was a practical rule for the regulation of the traffic of the crowd of people. Every day a lamb of no more than one year old was to be offered. It was to be without blemish, thus symbolizing that purity only can be offered for sin. We must keep in mind that all the blood sacrifices were given in view of the sinless Lamb of God who would give Himself for the sins of man. In reference to the offerings, we must keep in mind that the sacrifices were eaten by the priests and people. Only a small portion was totally consumed as a burnt offering to the Lord. ***As much as he is able:*** There was room made for one to give according to his ability (vs 11). He could give voluntarily according to his ability (vss 5,7,11).

46:12-15 ***Will provide daily a lamb:*** It was not possible that any blood offering of an animal would take away sins (Hb 10:1-4). However, the continual offerings brought to their minds their sin. When Jesus came, He offered His blood once and for all. And thus, the drudgery of making animal sacrifices was done away. Jesus' sacrifice was complete and sufficient for all time (Hb 7:26-28). Christians today have the great blessing of being completely forgiven of sins, as well as not being under the law of ceremonial sacrifices that are outlined in this text (See comments Rm 7:1-4).

46:16-18 The prince had full ownership of his estate. He had the right to give it to anyone he chose. However, any part of the estate that was given to his servants was to revert back to the original estate during the year of liberty (Lv 25:10). The priestly family was provided for by the people, and thus there was no reason why he should evict people from their land. This unjust practice occurred during the apostasy of God's people, and it was never to happen again in their history (See 1 Kg 21:1-16; Mc 2:9).

46:19-24 ***Priest will boil:*** The priests were to prepare food for themselves from the offerings of the people. They would eat it alone. In another place separate from where the priests prepared and ate their food, the Levites prepared the sacrificial meals for the people. This area was built with hearths where the Levites could cook the food, and then distribute it to the people. The sacrificial meals brought the people together with the Levites, whose work it was to teach the people. The sacrifices, therefore, accomplished the purpose of continually bringing the people to the teachers of the law of God.

Chapter 47

47:1-5 The apocalyptic symbolism of this prophecy encourages Bible interpreters to look beyond the short term restoration of the temple by the returning exiles. If we understand the apocalyptic symbols of Ezekiel's writing as a metaphor concerning the beginning and continuation of the Messianic age, then there is great depth to what he says in this context. However, we would also guard ourselves from interpretive dogmatism since the inscription is in apocalyptic symbolism. The assigning of the land to the returnees was started in 45:1-8 and continued in 47:13 – 48:35. There is an interlude here in reference to the flowing water that proceeded from under the temple, possibly signifying the salvational redemption that would come from the presence of God and go to all nations (See Zc 14:8; compare Rv 22:1). The phenomenon about the water is that the flow becomes larger as it proceeds from the temple, to the point that it cannot be crossed by a man. It becomes larger without the help of smaller rivers flowing into it, possibly symbolizing the growth of God's people as they would go into all the world (Compare comments Is 2:1-4).

47:6-12 The blessing that came from the waters was that everything it touched would have life. When Ezekiel came to the banks of the river he saw that it had caused the growth of

many trees. The apocalyptic symbols portray a garden of Eden environment that is captivating by those wandering in the desert. They are drawn to the river because the sustenance of life is provided by the river. The east country would be a reference to the desert valley of the Jordan River east of the temple. The waters from the Sea of Galilee empty into the Jordan River, which river eventually empties into the Salt Sea (Dead Sea). ***The great sea:*** The Mediterranean Sea. ***Everything will live where the river goes:*** Ezekiel takes the minds of the people, who were at the time in captivity, beyond the hope of their restoration to the land, the rebuilding of the temple, and resettlement in the land. He wrote prophecy of the Messianic age that they would not fully understand until its fulfillment (1 Pt 1:10-12). However, the returnees knew enough about the symbolism of the prophecy to understand that its fulfillment could not be in the restoration of the people to the land and the rebuilding of the temple. The prophecy was clear enough to generate anticipation as to things that would come, but cryptic enough to stimulate hope for another restoration yet in the future.

47:13-20 ***Twelve tribes:*** There should never be any discussion concerning the restoration of a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel to the land after the captivity. Even in apocalyptic language the metaphor of the restoration of the twelve tribes would mean nothing if a remnant of the twelve tribes did not literally return to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. ***Joseph:*** Joseph would have two portions, for from Joseph came the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The limits of the borders would begin with Damascus in the north. On the east the border would extend through Gilead along the Jordan River to the east side of the Dead Sea. To the south the border would go west through Kadesh and then to the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean coast would be the border on the west.

47:21-23 In preparation for the Messianic age, these instructions were given to the Jews in order that they allow proselytes to be assimilated into the nation. Proselytes were to be given a possession of land, and thus have inheritance rights among the people.

Chapter 48

48:1-7 In this chapter, verses 1-7 and 23-27 refer to tribal allotments of the land that were comparable to the allotments that were given when Israel first came into the land. Dan is situated in the far north of Palestine, with Issachar, Zebulun and Gad located in the south. These allotments clearly identify the restoration of the remnant of all twelve tribes to the land after the Babylonian captivity.

48:8-29 See the description 45:1-8 of these allotments which was possibly an abbreviated version of what was given here. An interesting point in this text was that the portion given to the Levites was not to be sold or traded, for the allotment was given to the Levites for a perpetual service to the Lord. The location of the temple was about four kilometers south of the original location. The priests were given the area where the original temple was situated. The city was to be located in the middle of a triangle of land and surrounded by gardens. The city itself was to be built as a square. Since the measurements of the city would make it about two kilometers long on each side, the size was beyond the actual construction of the city that was accomplished when they returned. It is possible that Ezekiel uses these measurements to picture the spiritual city of God that was yet to come in the Messianic age. The city, and its gates, was a symbol of all of God's people.

48:30-35 ***The name of the city:*** The name of the city, "the Lord is there," is symbolic of a repentant nation. When Israel went into the apostasy of creating gods after their own imagination, and laws they invented that these imagined gods bound on their consciences, the Lord was removed from their hearts and minds. When they repented of this idolatry, the Lord was restored to their hearts and minds. He once again lived in their hearts (See comments Lk 17:20,21).

Daniel

WRITER

The name Daniel means, "God is my judge." His name was later changed by the Babylonians to Belteshazzar, meaning, "protect his life." Daniel was born around 620 B.C. In 605 B.C., and at the age of fifteen, he was taken with 10,000 captives by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylonian captivity. He spent the rest of his life in captivity, dying at the age of 85 to 90 years old, sometime after the release of the first group of exiles by the Medes and Persians in 536 B.C. He was born of the tribe of Judah, and possibly a descendant of the royal Davidic family (See 1:3-6).

DATE

The book was either written by Daniel who recounted his life and experiences, or it was written by one who was close to Daniel during his ministry. Some have suggested that the book was written during the Maccabean period, and thus place the time of writing around 165 B.C. Arguments are stronger for Daniel writing the book around 530 B.C. in order to give the fellow exiles encouragement concerning the work of God among the nations. He wanted to remind the people of God that God was in control of all things, and thus they could trust in His promises concerning their future.

If the book were written at a later date, it would have been too late to accomplish the theme of being a book of encouragement for the Jews. At the close of the book, the release of the captives was about to transpire. Daniel's prophecies were given in order to prepare the

people for a turbulent history until the consummation of national Israel. This would happen in the coming and coronation of the Son of Man. The book was thus written at a time when God wanted to prepare His people for the future, and the termination of national Israel. The tribulation they would endure for the next five centuries would not be a result of sin on their part, as it was in the past. Their tribulation would be the result of the international turmoil that would transpire between nations until the coming of the Messiah.

BOOK

The book is divided into two sections. Chapters 1-6 are primarily historical in content in reference to the Babylonian Empire. Chapters 7-12 are prophetic in reference to those events that would affect the Jews until the coming of the Messiah, and shortly after, until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The prophetic revelation brings the readers to the revelation of the work and kingdom of the Christ who would ascend to the throne of God in heaven. Once the coronation had taken place, then it would be time for the end of national Israel through whom God had worked since the days of Abraham in order to bring the Messiah into the world.

The languages of the book are both Hebrew and Aramaic. The material of 1:1 – 2:4a was originally written in Hebrew, and thus specifically directed to the Jews in captivity. The material of 8:1 – 12:13 was originally written in Aramaic, the common language of the captives. This section was directed to the nations. During the period that the Jews were in captivity, Aramaic was the language of the Babylonian Empire. So when Daniel wrote concerning world events that would affect the Jews, he wrote in Aramaic, a common language of the nations. Aramaic was also a second language that was spoken by the Jews, some of whom had been in captivity for almost 150 years at the time of writing.

Portions of the book are written as apocalyptic literature. In these portions, many symbols were used to portray a message concerning the changes that would take place among the nations surrounding Palestine until the coming of the Christ. As the book of Revelation is the apocalypse of the New Testament, Daniel is the same for the Old Testament. As Revelation focuses on the evil work of the Roman Empire in its confrontation with Christianity, the book of Daniel gives a history of turmoil of the nations of the Near East until the coming of Jesus. Revelation focuses on the direct impact of Roman policies on Christianity. Daniel, on the other hand, reveals the unfortunate indirect impact that the nations in turmoil would have on God's people in Palestine.

There is an element of mystery in the apocalyptic message of Daniel as he reveals the coming international turmoil through which the people of God would endure until the coming of the Messiah. In apocalyptic literature emphasis is not on the fulfillment of prophecy. Emphasis is on the dynamics of forces that work against one another in order to manifest the completion of God's purposes through His people. The international turmoil that is revealed through changing times is climaxed with the revelation of God's work in the affairs of man in order to accomplish His purpose. Thus the apocalyptic story often ends with national or international turmoil and God's judgment upon the wicked. Since the Jews, after their return to the land of Palestine, would endure the conflict of many surrounding nations, God wanted to encourage them with the message of Daniel. He wanted to remind them that all things were under His control.

The book of Daniel thus focuses on the sovereign reign of God over all things (See 2:47; 3:17,18; 4:28-37; 5:18-31). In the midst of turmoil, Daniel reassures the captives that God rewards faithfulness (See 1:8,9,15-21; 2:17-19,27,28,48,49; 3:12,16-18,26-30; 5:16-18,29; 6:7-12,19-24). Though His people would suffer amidst the turmoil of international affairs, God would eventually reign victorious over all evil forces (See 2:44; 7:9-12,26,27; 8:25; 9:27; 11:45; 12:13). When the Son of Man was ascended unto the Ancient of Days, God's work through Israel would be consummated (7:13,14). After the completion of the purpose for the existence of Israel, it would dissolve into the spiritual Israel, the church (Gl 3:26-29). National Israel would be terminated in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Babylonian Empire

Nabopolassar (625-605 B.C.) was the first king of Babylon when the Babylonian Empire was in its early beginnings. He led the Babylonians in a defeat of the Assyrian Empire in 612 and 609 B.C. His successor, Nebuchadnezzar, defeated the Assyrian/Egyptian alliance at the battle of Carchemish in 609 B.C., and thus established the Babylonian Empire that took over all the former Assyrian Empire territories. Nebuchadnezzar reigned from 605 to 561 B.C. He was succeeded by Amel-Mardu (Evil-Merodach) his son. Amel-Mardu reigned until 559 B.C. when his brother-in-law, Neriglissar assassinated him. Neriglissar reigned from 559 to 556 B.C. After him came Labashi-Marduk, the son of Neriglissar, who reigned only nine months before being assassinated. Nabonidus then seized the throne. During his reign, Belshazzar, his son, reigned coregent with his father until 539 B.C. In 539 B.C. the Babylonian Empire came to a close. The Medes and the Persians brought the Empire to a close and it was never to be in existence again.

Medo-Persian Empire

At the time the kingdom of Babylon was in its twilight hours, Cyrus, the king of Ansham, overthrew the Median

Empire in 550 B.C. He subsequently became the king of Persia around 547 B.C. In 539 B.C. the Medes and Persians overthrew the Babylonians. Cyrus was the king of the Medo-Persian Empire from 536-529 B.C., after which, his son, Cambyses, became king. Cambyses expanded the Persian Empire south by defeating the Egyptians. Egyptian territory remained a part of the Persian Empire until 332 B.C., the time when the Persian Empire eventually succumbed to the Greeks. Darius I (Hystaspes) was king of the Medo-Persian Empire from 521-486 B.C. He was followed by Xerxes (Ahasuerus) (485-465), Artaxerxes (465-425), Darius II (Nothus) (424-404), Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) (404-429), Artaxerxes III (Ochus) (359-338) and Darius III (Codomanus) (336-331). In 332 B.C. the Medo-Persian Empire came to an end when Alexander the Great expanded the Greek Empire to the east.

Rule of the Seleucidae

When Alexander the Great unexpectedly died, the Greek Empire was divided into four regions over which Alexander's four generals ruled. The Greek rulers who directly affected the people of God in Palestine were the Seleucidae and Ptolemy rulers. The Seleucidae ruled over Syria and most of the former Babylonian Empire to the north of Palestine and east of Syria. The rulers of the Seleucidae kingdom were the following:

Seleucus I (Nicator) – 312-280 B.C.
Antiochus I (Soter) – 279-261 B.C.
Antiochus II (Theos) – 261-246 B.C.
Seleucus II (Callinicus – 246-226 B.C.
Seleucus III (Ceraunus) – 226-223 B.C.
Antiochus III (the Great) – 222-187 B.C.
Seleucus IV (Philopator) – 186-176 B.C.
Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) – 175-164 B.C.

Rule of the Ptolemies

The Ptolemies ruled over Egypt to the south of Palestine. Palestine often became a field of conflict in the struggle between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucidae of Syria. At different times throughout these years of struggle, either one or the other had control of the land of Palestine. The following are the early Ptolemies of Egypt:

Ptolemy I (Soter) – 322-285 B.C.
Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) – 285-247 B.C.
Ptolemy III (Euergetes I – 247-222 B.C.
Ptolemy IV (Philopator) – 222-205 B.C.
Ptolemy V (Epiphanes) – 205-182 B.C.
Ptolemy VI (Eupator) – 182 B.C.
Ptolemy VII (Philometor) – 182-170 B.C.
Ptolemy (Philometor) coregent with
Ptolemy (Euergetes II) – 170-164 B.C.
Ptolemy (Philometor) – 164-146 B.C.

Daniel gives a prophetic picture of events that transpired between the Ptolemies and Seleucidae rulers that greatly affected the lives of the Jews in Palestine during the period that led up to Rome's conquest of the region. Some important events to remember include the marriage of Antiochus II of Syria to Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II, in 248 B.C. (11:6). Wars broke out between Ptolemy III and Seleucus II (11:7ff). Antiochus II made himself the ruler of Palestine, but was later forced to retreat because of his defeat by Ptolemy IV at Raphia in 217 B.C. In 202 B.C. Antiochus II conquered the territory of Palestine. Two years later, Egypt attempted to conquer Palestine, but was repelled (11:12,13). In 197 B.C., Cleopatra, the daughter of Antiochus III, married Ptolemy V (11:17). In 176 B.C., Antiochus IV became the ruler of Syria (8:9,23; 11:21). While acting on information from one called Simon, in 176 B.C. Seleucus IV sought to gain control of the temple treasures through his chief minister, Heliodorus (11:20).

The high priest, Onias III, the leader of the Chasidim, was deposed by Antiochus. Jason, a leader among the Hellenistic Jews was appointed in his place. Jason was later deposed in favor of Menelaus. Onias III was eventually assassinated (11:22; 1 Enoch 90:8; 2 Maccabees 4:33-35). In 170 B.C. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) invaded Egypt. He initially conquered Pelusium, and later prevailed over Egypt (11:25-27; 1 Maccabees 1:16-18). At this time Jason had reappointed himself as high priest in Jerusalem. However, on his return from his conquest of Egypt, Antiochus Epiphanes deposed him, plundered the temple, and massacred many Jews (8:9,10; 11:28; 1 Maccabees 1:21-28). It was around this time that the Romans entered the picture by forcing Antiochus Epiphanes from Egypt in 169 B.C. Potilius Laenas of Rome eventually forced Antiochus Epiphanes to give up his claim on Egypt.

In 169-168 B.C. Apollonius made a surprise attack on Jerusalem, massacring many Jews and forcing many to flee for their lives. He then established a garrison of soldiers in Jerusalem for the Syrians. Antiochus Epiphanes subsequently ordered the termination of Jewish religious ceremonies, forbidding the Jews' honoring of the Sabbath and circumcision. He burned copies of the Torah and abolished sacrifices. A pagan altar was set up in the temple in 168 B.C. (8:11-13,24,25; 11:30-35). However, one year later Mattathias and his sons rose up against the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes (11:37; 1 Enoch 90:9; 1 Maccabees 2). When Mattathias died, his son, Judas, continued the revolt against the occupation of Palestine, defeating the Syrians and killing the two Syrian generals, Apollonius and Seron (1 Maccabees 3:1-14). The cleansing of the temple took place on the 25th of Chisleu (December 25th), a little over three years after it was desecrated by Antiochus. Antiochus later sought to plunder a temple in Elymais of Persia. However, he was defeated by the residents and later died at Taboe (8:14,25; 11:45).

Daniel's detailed account concerning the turmoil of the nations in reference to the land of Palestine has led some critics to believe that the book was actually written as a history book, instead of a prophecy. But when one studies through the content of the book, there is no

support for the book to have been written after the many historical events that are described by Daniel. The encouragement of its content would be valid only if it were a prophecy of things to come in the history of God's people in Palestine. In fact, the prophecies of historical events to come were so detailed that when revealed to Daniel, he fainted at their complexity and how the nations would affect the people of God. Nevertheless, there was a time coming wherein peace would be restored for a brief period of time. At that time, God would send the Messiah into the world. Rome eventually gained control of Palestine, and subsequently brought peace to the land by allowing some autonomy among the Jews. When the fullness of time came, the Redeemer for whom all God's people had been waiting was revealed (Gl 4:4).

It is our general understanding that all the prophecies and fulfillments of Daniel were directed to the people of God who were headed for a time of frustration and discouragement as victims of international turmoil. The fulfillment of the prophecies would come in the first century when the descendants of God's people in the interbiblical era would experience the fulfillment of the prophecies. There is no contextual reason to hijack these contexts for our own curiosity today in reference to the end of time, or for those who would live prior to the final coming of Jesus. We must always keep Israel in mind when interpreting prophecies that were made to Israel. God was working through Israel in order to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. Once this eternal plan was accomplished, then it was God's plan to terminate Israel as a race of people with whom He had a special covenant relationship. Israel was terminated in Christ (See comments Gl 3:23-26). National Israel was terminated by the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). The purpose of the prophets, therefore, was to bring the Jews and all mankind to the cross of Jesus. The prophets were sent in order to bring a remnant of Israel to the cross in order that the promises made to the fathers be fulfilled (See Gn 12:1-3).

We must not commit interpretative robbery of the prophets' prophecies in order to satisfy our curiosity of current events and our anticipation for the final coming. God's immediate historical purpose through Daniel was to spiritually lead His people through the era of captivity, and then give them encouragement through prophecy until the enthronement of the Son of Man. In Matthew 24, Jesus would later pick up where Daniel left off, and thus be more specific concerning the consummation of 2,000 years of Abrahamic history in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Once the Son of Man was enthroned in heaven in A.D. 30, God in revelation to John, again took His people through the onslaught of both Jewish and Roman persecution in order that they come forth as shining lights of righteousness. The church would then continue unto the revelation of the Son of God from heaven at the end of time. It would be then that God's people would transition into a new heaven and earth wherein dwells righteousness. Our encouragement from Daniel comes in discovering the faithfulness of God in carrying out His work as planned and foretold. We know that He is still working today in the affairs of the world to bring the church into eternal glory. Because of this work in the past, we have no need to doubt His present work to bring the saints to victory in the future.

History Of Peoples & Nations
(1:1 – 7:28)

Outline: (1) Faithfulness of Daniel and friends (1:1-21), (2) Nebuchadnezzar's dream of an image (2:1-49), (3) Nebuchadnezzar's golden image (3:1-30), (4) Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a tree (4:1-37), (5) End of Belshazzar and Babylon (5:1-31), (6) Deliverance from the lion's den (6:1-28), (7) Daniel's dream of the four beasts (7:1-28)

Chapter 1
FAITHFULNESS OF DANIEL & FRIENDS

1:1,2 These two verses are in Hebrew in the original text, while 2:4 – 7:28 were written in Aramaic. The reason for this was that the portions of the book that were directed to the Jews were written in Hebrew, but the portions of the book that were written in reference to the nations were written in Aramaic, the language of the Near East world at the time of writing. ***Third year of the reign of Jehoiakim:*** On his way to battle with the Assyrians against the Babylonians at Carchemish, Pharaoh-necho killed Josiah. Jehoiakim was then appointed the king of Judah by Pharaoh-necho. But Jehoiakim was subdued by Nebuchadnezzar immediately after his victory over the Assyrian/Egyptian alliance at Carchemish in 609 B.C. The first captivity of the Jews followed, and thus the beginning of the end of national Israel in the land of Palestine. It was with this first captivity of Israelites that Daniel and his three friends were taken into Babylonian captivity, from which Daniel never returned.

1:3-7 In order to consolidate his kingdom reign, Nebuchadnezzar chose the most gifted young men of his kingdom in order that they be trained for leadership. This was a political move on the part of Nebuchadnezzar in order that the Babylonian Empire be unified after the death of his father, Nabopolasser. ***Gave new names:*** In order to bring the Jewish young men into the pagan culture of Babylon, their names had to be changed. Daniel's name, meaning "God is my judge," was changed to Belteshazzar, meaning "the treasure (or, secrets) of Bell." Hananiah, meaning "the Lord is gracious," was changed to Shadrach, meaning "the inspiration of the sun." Mishael, meaning "one who comes from God," was changed to Meshach, meaning "one who belongs to the goddess Sheshack." Azariah, meaning "the Lord is my helper," was changed to Abednego, meaning "the servant of Nego" (the morning star).

1:8-13 ***Daniel determined:*** Even at this young age, Daniel, with his three friends, were young men with convictions. The parents of these four young men did not fail in their training of their children to remain faithful to God. The convic-

tions of the young men were so strong that they refused to go with the crowd, even under the orders of the king of Babylon. God can use young men with such great convictions. The integrity of Daniel and his friends was manifested in their convictions to stand for that which they had made a commitment. Neither peer pressure nor kings could deter them from their convictions. They refused to partake of food that was either dedicated to pagan gods, or manifested a compromise of their faith. Their names could be changed by the king, but not their convictions. ***Vegetables:*** Literally, seeds. The diet was generally a diet of seeds and vegetables. The ten-day hygienic diet gave the youth time for their bodies to manifest the benefits of the good diet.

1:14-16 At the end of the ten days, the proof of the diet was confirmed in the appearance of Daniel and his three friends. ***Took away the portion of their food:*** We would assume that Melzar put all the youth on the same diet. We can only wonder how much complaint came from them when Melzar removed the meat and wine from their meals. We would assume that neither Daniel, nor his three friends, gained the friendship of the other youths because Melzar changed their diets. We must keep in mind that these same youths were contemporaries with Daniel and his friends as they grew up to be rulers in the Babylonian Empire. It was possibly in these early years that jealousy started to grow in their hearts toward these four righteous young men who had committed themselves to serve their God.

1:17-21 ***God gave them:*** This was revelation of knowledge and wisdom that increased their intellect ten times to what they could acquire through the natural processes of learning by which the other youths had to gain access to knowledge and wisdom. As God had directly given Joseph such knowledge when he was in Egypt, so Daniel and his three friends were miraculously given knowledge and wisdom in order that they be promoted in the kingdom of Babylon. ***First year of King Cyrus:*** This would be Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire. The date would be 539 B.C., the date when the Medes and Persians overthrew the Babylonian Empire. Daniel continued his influence over the Babylonians until the Babylonians were overthrown. He continued his ministry to at least the third year of Cyrus (10:1).

Chapter 2

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM OF AN IMAGE

Beginning at 2:4, the original manuscript was written in Aramaic because the message was to the nations who affected the people of God in Palestine. The Aramaic message continues to the end of chapter 7.

2:1-3 With the message of Daniel's vision of chapter 7, this dream of Nebuchadnezzar is the key message of the book (See comments ch 7 & Rv 13). What was revealed in this dream and Daniel's vision of chapter 7, was given for the purpose of encouraging the people of God until the coming of the Messianic age. This age would begin when the Son of Man ascended to the throne of the Ancient of Days and assumed kingdom reign over all things. Once this consummation of the ages had come, then Israel could be assured that the promises made to the fathers had been fulfilled. ***Nebuchadnezzar ... commanded to call:*** God was at work in all that took place on this occasion. He revealed the dream, but also knew that Nebuchadnezzar would go to extreme measures in order to have the dream revealed. His efforts to have the revelation explained by the wisest and most knowledgeable men of the Empire were futile. Such should be a warning to those modern-day prognosticators who would use their dreams to determine the future (See comments Jr 23:25-28,32; 29:8,9). God reveals His will to man through written word today. He reserves only for Himself the ability to know the future. ***Magicians:*** These were those who were involved in the arts of the occult. ***Astrologers:*** Babylon was known for these who thought that they could gain knowledge through their interpretation of the movements of the heavenly bodies. ***Sorcerers:*** Through their incantations, these assumed that they could gain knowledge, and thus inquire into the supernatural for the purpose of controlling the behavior of men. ***Chaldeans:*** These were the priestly leaders of Babylon. They resorted to the incantations of the magicians, astrologers and sorcerers in order to maintain their power and control over the minds of the people. In the absence of the word of God, these misguided religionists controlled others by what they could conjure up in their own minds. It is inherent within men to be religious. But when there is an absence of the word of God, men will create gods after their own imagination and religious behavior after their own desires. Leaders who are ignorant of the word of God will use mind-controlling incantations to lead those who also do not love the word of God. Those who reject the word of God will gladly sustain those who will satisfy their idle religious curiosity (Compare comments Mk 7:1-9; 2 Th 2:10-12; 2 Tm 4:1-4).

2:4-13 Herein is revealed a contest between the true spokesman for God and those religionists who presumed to have knowledge and experience of things concerning the supernatural. The contest was between Daniel and the Chaldeans who spoke for the magicians, astrologers and sorcerers (See comments 1 Kg 18). ***Let the king tell ... the dream:*** In order that Daniel be confirmed as a true spokesman for God, the situation in the context was established to prove beyond any doubt that God was working through him. Those who affirm that the book of Daniel was written as a history book, instead of a book of prophecy, deny this evidence that God used in order to confirm His messengers. Only God could reveal to Daniel the dream, and thus, only He too could reveal the interpretation. ***Bargaining for time:*** The false religious leaders knew that they could not reveal the dream. If they could have only know the dream, then they could have devised some sort of interpretation that would have appeased the king. They could have given a fulfillment that would come to pass long after the king was dead, and thus be secure in their positions as religious leaders. ***There is no man on earth who can reveal the king's matter:*** Realizing the desperate situation in which the king had placed them, the religious prognosticators sought to defend themselves before the king. Their conclusion was correct. It was not in the power of man to reveal dreams. It could have been that the king had not really forgotten the details of the dream, but simply wanted to test those of his kingdom who presumed to know the future. If they could only

reveal the dream itself, then he could have trusted their interpretation. But they failed the test, and thus were about to reap the consequences. ***They sought Daniel:*** We must assume that at least some of these religious leaders were former acquaintances of Daniel when they were all young men. Because they knew of him, they sought for him. These false religious leaders had failed concerning what they had claimed to be able to do. Nebuchadnezzar, therefore, sought to rid his kingdom of all religious fakes in order that the kingdom not be plagued by religious deceivers.

2:14-16 Daniel and his three friends, who were ranked politically high in the kingdom by this time (1:19,20), went directly to the king when he was informed concerning the king's decision. He wisely asked for time in order that the king regain his composure, as well as to bring peace of mind to all the religious leaders who were fearful for their lives. It may have also been a period of time when the religious leaders anxiously hoped for deliverance through Daniel.

2:17-23 ***Desire mercies of the God of heaven:*** The religious leaders of Babylon were tried and convicted of their presumption to know the future by consulting and scheming concerning the simple wisdom and knowledge of man. Daniel and his friends, however, were judged and proven to be true men of God. Because the wise men had totally failed with their presumptions among the people, God manifested His true messengers before all Babylon. We would assume, therefore, that though the religious prognosticators had been spared, their jealousy toward Daniel and his friends grew.

2:24-30 Arioch immediately identified the one he had found who could interpret the dream. Daniel was identified to be one of the Israelite captives. He identified Daniel in order that there be no question in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar that the one who would interpret the dream was not one of the religious leaders of Babylon. ***A God ... who reveals secrets:*** Contrary to what the religious leaders would claim, Daniel gave all credit to God for the revelation of the interpretation. Daniel knew that only God could do such a thing. ***What will be in the latter days:*** We must keep in mind that the dream that was given to Nebuchadnezzar was not for the sake of the Babylonian Empire. It was for the purpose of bringing comfort to the people of God. God wanted His people to know that He was still the sovereign God of the nations. In this first revelation of the book of Daniel, the prophecy is in reference to world empires. After the reconfirmation of the changes that would take place among the world empires, beginning in chapter 8 it would be revealed to Daniel the specific international struggles that would take place with the people of God in the land of Palestine. All these international affairs would be culminated with the coronation of the Messiah at the right hand of God. The Son of Man would reign from heaven over all kingdoms of this world (7:13,14; See comments 1 Tm 6:15).

2:31-45 In this context, Daniel interpreted a God-given dream that He had revealed to King Nebuchadnezzar. The great image of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar was a prophecy of four earthly kingdom reigns or empires. ***This great image:*** The first kingdom was that of Nebuchadnezzar who represented the Babylonian kingdom (vss 37,38). After the Babylonian kingdom would come another, the Medo-Persian kingdom (vs 39). After the Medo-Persian kingdom, the Greek kingdom would arise (vs 39). A fourth kingdom would arise after the Greek kingdom. This was the Roman kingdom (vs 40). Daniel then interpreted that it would be in the days of the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, that God would set up another kingdom reign. This kingdom would have authority over all the earth. However, it would not be a physical kingdom as was characteristic with the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman Empires (Lk 17:20,21). It would be a kingdom that was manifested on earth, but was not of this world (Jn 18:36). Daniel interpreted that the fourth kingdom would break in pieces, and that the kingdom that God would establish would assume all the authority of the earthly kingdoms (vs 44; see comments Rv 21:24). It would assume sovereignty of earthly kingdoms in the sense that its sovereignty would be over all earthly kingdoms. ***Kingdom:*** Herein is the prophecy of a kingdom reign that would assume the totality of authority that was manifested and exercised by the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdom reigns (See 1 Tm 6:15). We must keep in mind that the authority of this kingdom would not be exercised in the manner that earthly kingdoms exercise their authority. The kingdom that would be established from a heavenly reign would manifest authority on earth through the obedience of men to the word of their King (Jn 12:48; see Lk 17:20,21). The kingdom reign of verse 44 would be universal. It would extend throughout the world. There would be no limits to the expansion of its authority as the authority of the King's word was preached throughout the world. This prophecy, therefore, is speaking of a universal kingdom reign that would come in the days of the Roman kings. Though the prophecy does not explain any individual king in reference to this kingdom, the fact is that the kingdom would be universal. It would have no earthly limitations (Jn 18:35,36). We would assume, therefore, that the One who would reign with total sovereignty would exercise all authority over all things (See comments Mt 28:18; 1 Pt 3:22). The universality of the sovereignty assumes the existence of the universality of the authority of the King. We must keep in mind that in this prophecy, as well as in many of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom, the kingdom reign or sovereignty of the king is emphasized. The prophecies assume the sovereignty of the King over all things because the King's authority would extend over all things. The reason these prophecies emphasize the kingdom reign is because contrasts are being established between the earthly kingdoms that were in power at the time the prophecies were made and the sovereignty that would be manifested through the reign of the Messiah. A contrast is also being established between the limited earthly kingdoms and the response to the kingdom reign that would come from all nations during the time of the Messiah's reign. Universal kingship assumes universal kingdom reign. And if the King is to have universal kingdom reign, then the response to the reign (church) would go throughout all nations. Verse 44 is discussing the assumption of this sovereignty. ***Stone:*** In verse 45, "a stone" was cut out of the mountain of kingdom reign and broke in pieces the power of earthly authorities. It did so by breaking the power of the fourth kingdom (Rome) (vss

34,35). Herein is the impact of heavenly sovereignty of the King that is manifested on earth in the hearts of men. When the will of the Father is done on earth as it was done in heaven (Mt 6:9,10), then the kingdom reign of Deity is manifested (See comments Mt 16:18,19). It is manifested to be stronger than any patriotism to any earthly kingdom. This transpired in the days of the Roman kingdom when men and women responded in great numbers to the kingdom reign of Jesus (See comments At 2:36-47). Herein is the church (the stone) and the influence of heavenly kingdom reign on earth in the hearts of men (Lk 17:20,21). One can only imagine the anticipation that was created in the minds of the Jews as they read the prophecy of this dream. They had lost their nationhood in the past because of their idolatry. They would be restored to Palestine where they would continually be occupied and harassed by the surrounding nations. But there would come a time when their God would establish a kingdom reign above all the kingdoms of the world. Therefore, in order to continue His encouragement of His people in captivity, God revealed the vision of this chapter and chapter 7 (See comments ch 7; compare comments Rv 13).

2:46-49 Nebuchadnezzar was awestruck concerning Daniel's revelation of the meaning of the dream. He was so overwhelmed by the interpretation that we are led to believe that he actually knew the details of the dream itself, but did not know the meaning. The very fact that Daniel was able to tell him the details of the dream was enough to convince him that Daniel was a true prophet of God. Though he did not understand the fulfillment of the interpretation, he knew that Daniel had revealed what he had actually dreamed. ***Worshiped:*** Though Nebuchadnezzar's worship of Daniel was misguided, his actions manifested his total confidence in Daniel. The result was what God intended for Daniel and his friends. He wanted them to be promoted in the kingdom in order to be an encouragement to the people of God in their captivity. Nebuchadnezzar gave Daniel and his friends high political status, and thus God was working through them to protect his people throughout the captivity years. God used Daniel from the very first captivity to the end of the captivity in order to be a spiritual center of reference for His people. The Israelites needed a stable spiritual light in their process of repentance from idolatry to faith in the one true and living God. Daniel and his three friends provided a spiritual center of reference for God's people.

Chapter 3
NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S GOLDEN IMAGE

3:1-6 We could assume that Nebuchadnezzar conceived the idea of this image from his dream in chapter 2. He fell down before Daniel in response to Daniel's interpretation of the dream, and thus he concluded that such would be the reaction of the people to his image of gold. Whether the image was to focus worship on himself or on some pagan god, we are not told. He did want to encourage worship on the part of the people, but his pagan mind moved him to pursue such by the wrong means (See comments At 14:11-16). Since in the previous dream Daniel interpreted that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, we could conclude that the image was made by one, Nebuchadnezzar, who had little knowledge of the true and living God. In his arrogance, therefore, Nebuchadnezzar possibly sought to draw worship to himself through the image. ***Height ... width:*** This statue was approximately 28 meters high (90 feet) and 5.5 meters wide (18 feet). Its massive presence was commanding, and thus could be seen throughout the region from a great distance.

3:7-18 ***Certain Chaldeans:*** It is interesting that this priestly group of religious leaders who were previously spared from death by Daniel's interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2, are now seeking an accusation against Daniel's friends in order that they be killed. Such is the character of religious leaders who cherish their positions and possessions more than the truth. We must also understand that the religious leaders had known the men for several years, and thus understood their beliefs. Their jealousy, therefore, moved them to rid the kingdom of their righteous influence over the people. ***Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury:*** Nebuchadnezzar's command to dictate religious behavior was challenged by the three friends of Daniel (See comments At 4:28,29). ***Who is this God who will deliver you:*** As with the contest between Daniel and the religious leaders in chapter 2, here again is a contest between the true God of Israel and the false gods in which Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians believed. In this case, God turned the accusing actions of the Chaldeans against themselves. We do not need to give you an answer: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had already determined their behavior and response to any threats that would be made toward them to compromise their principles. They trusted in God for their deliverance. But if God did not deliver them from the fiery furnace, then they still would not submit to a command to pay homage to false gods. Their example for all the Jews in captivity was more important than bowing down to a pagan idol.

3:19-25 ***Facial expression was altered:*** This was an indication of a king who lived with every command of his rule being obeyed without question. The three Jews were not being defiant. They realized that there was One greater than Nebuchadnezzar who had command over him (See comments Jn 18:36). It was to this One they must first be obedient in worship, for they knew that there were worse things than death. The message of the incident is that there is nothing on earth, neither man nor any created god after the imagination of man, who is to be worshiped. Worship is to be given only to Him who is the creator of all things. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew this, and thus they would not risk their destiny with the God of heaven by paying homage to some image made out of the elements of this world that God had created. They knew the responsibility of their leadership throughout the Babylonian Empire, and thus they refused to do that which had brought the people of God into captivity in the first place, that is, idolatry. They stood faithful without any knowledge of Jesus Christ which we have today. ***Like a son of the gods:*** Nebuchadnezzar certainly saw a heavenly being, for its appearance was not that of a man. God had sent His Angel to protect those who stood for Him against the commandment of an earthly king.

3:26-30 ***Most High God:*** Though Nebuchadnezzar was correct in identifying the God of the three men, in his thinking

his reference to God was only to the fact that he recognized that Israel's God was the "chief" of all gods. Nebuchadnezzar at least realized at the moment that only a true God could do what he had just witnessed. ***Sent His Angel:*** Whether this was one of God's angels, or the preincarnate Son of God, can be left to the speculation of the Bible student. There would certainly be no harm in believing that the One revealed with the three companions was Jesus before His incarnation. In this case, He dwelt among those of His who were in trouble. He would later be revealed through His incarnation in order to dwell among His people (Jn 1:14). In the revelation of the Son of God throughout the history of man, the Angel of God (the Son of Man) was revealed for the purpose of protection and comfort. ***No other god who can deliver in this way:*** There was first no other God, and second, no god created after the imagination of man could work anything that was supernatural. Nebuchadnezzar's testimony is that he had never experienced the work of the supernatural, and thus we must conclude that God would never allow man to work anything that was miraculous that would be a witness against the truth of His messengers and their message (See comments At 8:5-25). We must also not conclude that Nebuchadnezzar was a convert to monotheism. He did not believe that the only God was the God of Israel. He had a kingdom of idolaters to rule, and thus had to appease all his subjects who were hardened idolaters. However, he at least came to the conclusion that the God of Israel was above all other gods. For this reason, he issued the decree that Israel's God be respected among all the gods of his kingdom.

Chapter 4
NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S VISION OF A TREE

4:1-3 This chapter is a proclamation by a pagan king who realized the sovereignty and greatness of the God of Israel. Though living as the king of a kingdom of idolaters, at least Nebuchadnezzar realized that God sets up and takes down world leaders. Nebuchadnezzar here gave his witness to the authenticity of the miraculous wonders he experienced that were a revelation of the supernatural power of God.

4:4-18 The dream may have occurred in the latter part of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. He had conquered many nations of the world and thus built the great Babylonian Empire. He had built great fortified cities and palaces and flourished throughout his kingdom. As a person of the world, there was every reason for him to become arrogant and haughty. However, the dream greatly disturbed him. We could possibly conclude that in some way he understood the general sense of the dream. Nevertheless, he brought in the wisest men of his kingdom in order to give a correct interpretation. We would assume that if these men knew the meaning of the dream, they would certainly not tell it to this most powerful king. Since they were timid in their postulations as to what the dream meant, Nebuchadnezzar called for Daniel. Regardless of the meaning of the dream, Nebuchadnezzar knew that Daniel would give the true interpretation regardless of the consequences. Those who stand for the truth, regardless of the consequences, are trusted by the most pagan of men. Nebuchadnezzar explained the dream to Daniel, which dream indicated both judgment and mercy upon the "tree."

4:19-27 ***Astonished for one hour:*** It could be that Daniel did not realize the full implications of the dream. To him was revealed the meaning, and the extent to which Nebuchadnezzar would be dethroned and banished to wander with the birds and beasts was not revealed. He possibly wondered if this was the end of the Babylonian Empire. ***The dream favors those who hate you:*** We are not told if this was a conspiracy, or if it was the leadership of the kingdom taking control because their king lost his mind. In view of verse 25, it seems that the occasion was a conspiracy. Nebuchadnezzar was the tree that had grown strong. The Babylonian Empire became the security for many nations. Through Nebuchadnezzar's strength, many other nations of the world found their defense from invading enemies. Nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar would be cut down, though the Babylonian kingdom would continue. ***The stump:*** Mercy was manifested to Nebuchadnezzar in that he was eventually restored to the throne. He was not to be completely removed. ***Seven times will pass:*** Seven years. ***Until you know:*** The purpose of his dismissal from the throne was that he understand that God reigns over the kingdoms of the world. All that Nebuchadnezzar had accomplished had driven him to arrogance and hardening of heart toward the poor. He had become as those leaders of Israel in the latter times of the existence of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. As the king, he reigned for his own benefit, having little consideration for the subjects of his kingdom.

4:28-33 Nebuchadnezzar had every opportunity in the presence of Daniel and his three friends to experience the miraculous manifestation of God. He failed to respond with true faith, and thus he had to reap the consequences of refusing to take advantage of the opportunity for faith. But once the dream was interpreted, God waited one year before allowing the occasion to take place that drove the king from his palace. ***This great Babylon that I have built:*** Nebuchadnezzar certainly built one of the greatest kingdoms of the ancient world. The city of Babylon itself was a city with walls upon which two chariots could race side-by-side. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city had beautiful buildings and running water in many of the luxurious mansions. All this was built under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar. ***He ate grass as oxen:*** We are not told the particular insanity that Nebuchadnezzar suffered. He may have become delusional in his extreme arrogance. His extreme pride surely caused him to disconnect from the reality of humanity.

4:34-37 Though he was the victim of his own misguided character, God's mercy was poured out upon the humbled king. Kings come to their senses only when they realize that God is in control of all things. The recording of this case history of an arrogant king was for the purpose of bringing hope to the captive Jews. Nebuchadnezzar was only a passing king in history. But God's plan of redemption for man was an eternal plan that was to be revealed a little over 500 years from the time Nebuchadnezzar lived. Nebuchadnezzar realized that God establishes and terminates both kings and kingdoms. He did not deduct that God had an eternal plan of redemption

in mind that would spring forth from the people who were captives in his kingdom. We would conclude that God did not want His people in captivity to put too much trust in one who had exalted Daniel and his friends as prominent officials in the kingdom. The captivity would be for seventy years, and then Israel would again be allowed to reestablish her roots in the land of promise. The Babylonian Empire would pass from history, being remembered only through stone monuments. God only is eternal, and He only is the sovereign over all things.

Chapter 5
END OF BELSHAZZAR & BABYLON

5:1-4 ***Belshazzar:*** When Nebuchadnezzar died, his son, Evil-merodach came to the throne of the Babylonian Empire (See 2 Kg 25:27-30; Jr 52:31-34). However, he reigned only two years when Neriglissar, Evil-merodach's brother-in-law, led a rebellion and assassinated him. Though Neriglissar was not of royal blood, he assumed that his son, Labashi Marduk, who was born of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter whom he had married, would have a right to the throne. However, Labashi Marduk was rejected and the military leadership of the Empire enthroned Nabonidus, another son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar. Nitocris, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, gave birth to a son through Nabonidus, naming him Belshazzar. Because Belshazzar was of royal blood, he was made a coregent king with Nabonidus three years after Nabonidus had assumed the throne. Since Belshazzar was the reigning king of the city of Babylon and its province, it was this king who encountered Daniel. The setting of the incident that took place in this context came at the end of Belshazzar's kingship over Babylon. He was a psychopathic leader who dealt murderously with any competition in his realm. Because he was the spoiled child who was brought up in the luxury of the royal family, he had little compassion for the people and those who were around him. If his reign exemplified the moral degradation of the Babylonian Empire, then it was time for it to come to a close.

5:5-9 After fourteen years of reign in Babylon, Belshazzar had come to the end of his cruel reign. His father, Nabonidus, was engaged in battle with a coalition of armies of the Medes and Persians. The Babylonian Empire was thus in its evening hours as province by province fell to the Medes and Persians. On the evening of this event, King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire had surrounded the city of Babylon. It was at a time as this that the foolishness of Belshazzar was manifested in the fact that he conducted a feast for all his lords within the city. ***Fingers of a man's hand came forth:*** What happened during the drunken feast was something that terrified Belshazzar and all the guests who witnessed the fingers of a man's hand inscribing a message in the plaster of the wall. Though the king promised the greatest of riches for the one who could interpret the writing, no wise man could be found. ***Third ruler in the kingdom:*** Nabonidus was the first, Belshazzar the second, and the one who correctly interpreted the writing would be the third.

5:10-12 Since the people were in great confusion concerning the event of the writing on the wall, the queen mother, Nitocris, recalled one name, Daniel, who had interpreted dreams during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

5:13-16 Many years had passed since Daniel was active during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was known by reputation throughout the Empire (Jr 14:14), but he was possibly marginalized in his function as an official because of the wicked reign of Belshazzar. Nevertheless, Belshazzar had heard of Daniel, and thus sought for an interpretation of the handwriting.

5:17-24 ***Let your gifts be to yourself:*** Daniel would not participate in being a hired preacher for the king. The kingdom was full of such men, and thus Daniel did not want his reputation to be associated with such hirelings. If his interpretation was based on receiving wealth, then his interpretation would have been questioned. ***You ... have not humbled your heart:*** Though Belshazzar knew of the humbling experience of Nebuchadnezzar because of the arrogance of his heart, he did not learn from Nebuchadnezzar's experience. Belshazzar was cruel as a leader, and thus, he would not suffer banishment or insanity for a period. Instead, he would suffer death. By drinking from the vessels of the temple of God, he was mocking the God of the Jews.

5:25-29 The interpretation was clear. God was bringing to an end the reign of Belshazzar and the Babylonian Empire. Nabonidus, his father, had been defeated by the Medes and Persians in the field. Now the Medes and Persians were at the gate of Babylon. The kingship of Belshazzar was lacking moral fiber and leadership. And since Belshazzar was a cruel king in reference to his own officials, they aligned themselves throughout the kingdom with the Medes and Persians, or at least took a passive role, and thus allowed the city of Babylon to fall. The leaders of the kingdom were displeased with Belshazzar. They did not come to his aid in his time of need because they had been so mistreated by him during his reign. For this reason, the city fell in one night without any major battle.

5:30,31 In the same night in which the interpretation was made, Gobryas, King Cyrus' commander, let the Medo-Persian army into the city. It has been traditionally believed that the Medo-Persian army stopped or rerouted the river that ran into the city under the walls, and then entered the city through the dry river canal. However, according to the prophets who spoke of the king's lack of favor among the people, some have believed that the gates of the city were opened from inside, allowing the Medo-Persian army to enter unchallenged.

Chapter 6
DELIVERANCE FROM THE LION'S DEN

6:1-5 ***Dairus:*** It could be that Cyrus was the one who conquered and expanded the Medo-Persian Empire, but he left others to govern different provinces. Darius, the Mede, could have been the initial ruling monarch who was set over the city of Babylon (Compare 9:1). He thus "received the kingdom" by the appointment of Cyrus. In archaeological records, Darius is possibly the man referred to as Gubaru who was the governor of Babylon and the area beyond the Euphrates River. ***Sought to find occasion against Daniel:*** This was an occasion for political maneuvering at its worst. Jealousy was in the heart of wicked men who sought to destroy one who was faithful to God and righteous in behavior. In a political environment where favoritism gave one the opportunity for

advancement, the wicked presidents and princes developed a scheme by which they might rid the kingdom of righteous Daniel. We must keep in mind that Daniel was a very old man at this time, possibly in his late 80's. ***Concerning the law of his God:*** Daniel lived in harmony with the laws of the newly established Medo-Persian Empire, as he had under the Babylonian Empire. The moral laws of the Old Testament, therefore, were not culturally linked to the Jews. They were laws that could be obeyed regardless of the culture in which one lived.

6:6-9 The scheme was based on flattery of Darius, but for the purpose of tricking him into condemning Daniel to the lions' den. God knew of the scheme, and thus did not inform Daniel. He wanted to teach pagan kings again through the faithfulness of His people. God turns the wicked schemes of Satan against Satan himself. ***Signed the writing:*** Once the decree was signed, it became law and could not be changed. Darius was gullible. He was a new governor of Babylon, and thus was naive concerning the wickedness of rulers within his domain of responsibility.

6:10-17 Daniel was a devotionally courageous person. The text reads as if the decree had no consequence in his normal behavior. He continued as usual with his prayers, unaffected by what any king on earth might decree concerning the religious behavior of the citizens (See comments At 4:28,29). The principle that Daniel upheld was that no civil government or kingdom on earth has a right to dictate the religious beliefs and behavior of the people. If such a conflict of laws should occur, the people of God have no choice but to obey God rather than men (At 4:28,29). ***That Daniel:*** Their resentment of the righteous Daniel was brought out in their statement to Darius. They were not only against Daniel for political reasons, but we must also assume that the righteous behavior of Daniel intimidated them. ***The king ... was greatly displeased with himself:*** The king finally realized that he had been caught in the foolishness of his own political naivety. He was caught in the trap of Daniel's enemies, for he had to keep the law of the Medes and Persians that he had signed into law. However, he knew that Daniel was morally righteous. In his emotional turmoil, he had to save face before the people. Against his own will, he had to cast Daniel into the lions' den. ***The king sealed it:*** Once the den was sealed with the king's signet, it could not be opened. If anyone broke the seal, they would suffer the penalty of death.

6:18-24 The king knew that he had done wrong. His conscience troubled him, and thus he could not sleep. Somewhere in his thinking, he believed that the God of Daniel could deliver him from the lions, because for some reason he hurried to the den early in the morning. ***God has sent His angel:*** As an angel was sent to protect Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace, so here God sent His angel to be present with Daniel in the den of lions. God could have worked a miracle from a distance by closing the mouths of the lions. However, we are led to believe that the angel in this case was the preincarnate Christ, who before His incarnation, made the occasional manifestation of Himself for the comfort of the people of God. ***Their children and their wives:*** This was not an unusual punishment under the law of the ancients. When the leader of the family sinned, his entire family had to pay the price.

6:25-28 ***All the earth:*** Here, as well as in other texts, reference was to all the Medo-Persian territory. ***He works signs and wonders:*** The miraculous event of this context explains the purpose of miracles as a sign. The saving of Daniel among the lions signalled to Darius that the supernatural was present in the life of Daniel. The Hebrew word for "wonder" explains the reaction of the beholders to the intervention of the supernatural into the world of natural laws. When God sets aside the natural laws in order to reveal the supernatural, the reaction of man is wonder and amazement. In this case, the revelation of the supernatural had its intended effect on Darius. To him, there was no question that the God of Daniel was real. ***Darius ... Cyrus:*** This verse explains the fact that these two kings were coregent in reign during the time of Daniel. Cyrus militarily worked to consolidate the Medo-Persian Empire, while Darius, as other appointed regional kings, sought to bring order to the conquered regions of the Empire.

Chapter 7
DANIEL'S DREAM OF THE FOUR BEASTS

7:1-14 ***First year of Belshazzar:*** This vision took place fourteen years before the fall of the Babylonian Empire. ***Stirring on the great sea:*** As in the book of Revelation, the "sea" is the constantly changing populations of the world. In this stirring there is change, and thus kingdoms rise and fall. It is the nature of the populations of the world to give rise to governments and empires. The people of God must always keep in mind that all governments, kingdoms and empires come and go, but God is in control of all. He is working to bring to a close His plan for the creation of this world. He is working for the redemption of those who give themselves as subjects of His sovereignty. ***Four great beasts:*** Change was coming in the Middle East empires. This change was the central message of the dream that was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, in chapter 2 (See 2:31-45). Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a prophecy of four world kingdoms, beginning with the kingdom of Babylon and extending to the Roman Empire. In this chapter, Daniel was given a vision of four world kingdoms to come. The prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7 are parallel, though the vision of Daniel expands the prophecy of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 7 is Daniel's personal vision from God that reflects the same message as Nebuchadnezzar's dream of chapter 2 concerning world kingdoms. Daniel saw four beasts in his vision that represented four world kingdoms. As Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel saw the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. In both visions God was allowing men on earth to know the future change in the kingdom reign of God from heaven, as well as the time when this would take place. This fact is revealed in this vision in verses 13,14. These two prophecies were key prophecies that determined the time when God would change history by changing the One who would reign over all things from heaven, beginning with the existence of the fourth kingdom. History has subsequently proved the truth of the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7. The central purpose of both prophecies, however, was to reveal the message of consummation of Daniel 2:44 and Daniel 7:13,14. In the days of the Roman

kings, Daniel interpreted that the God of heaven would "set up kingdom reign" or sovereignty. This concept is brought out in the conclusion of Daniel's vision (vss 13,14). We must understand that the central revelation of these prophecies was the kingdom reign of God that would exist throughout the change of kingdoms that took place on earth. In Daniel 2:44 it was revealed that the King in heaven would change. It is significant to notice in the text of 2:44 that the article "the" is not present before the Hebrew word that is translated "kingdom." Some translators did no wrong by adding the article. However, the concept of the establishment of "sovereign reign" would be better understood if the article were left out. What was revealed to Daniel was that in the days of the Roman kings God would set up sovereignty, as is further revealed in 7:13,14. He would establish the kingdom reign of another. When speaking of the authority of the omnipresent God over all things, emphasis should be placed on reign and rule, not on territory or location. The word "kingdom" is simply used as a metaphor to reveal the sovereignty of God over all things. Daniel's interpretation of the Daniel 7 dream, specifically what is revealed in verses 13,14, refers to the reign and rule of the exalted Son of God from heaven as opposed to that which was manifested through the worldly kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome on earth. ***They brought Him near before Him:*** In reading this prophecy it is significant to understand that "in vision" Daniel was placed in heaven in order to see what transpired in heaven in reference to the sovereignty of Deity. He gives us a heavenly picture of what would happen when the Son of Man ascended to the right hand of the Father in heavenly places. The "Ancient of Days" is a reference to God, the Father. In explaining the prophecy from the viewpoint of heaven, Daniel saw the One "like the Son of Man" coming to the Father who is in heaven. Acts 1:9,10 speaks of the ascension of Jesus to the Father in a cloud. Daniel 7:13,14, therefore, is a prophecy of the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father to receive dominion, glory and sovereignty. ***There was given Him dominion and glory and sovereignty:*** When Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, He was given authority over all things, both in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). It was the church that filled the earth, for the church was the assembly of those who were obedient to the sovereignty of Jesus. Christians allowed the will of God to reign in their hearts on earth as it was obeyed in heaven (See comments Mt 6:10). The Son of Man was able to accomplish this because He, the head, was in control over all things for the sake of the church (Ep 1:20-23). As the parallel vision of the dream of chapter 2, Daniel 7 refers to world kingdoms and the beginning of a divine sovereignty in the days of the fourth kingdom. Babylon was represented by the lion (vs 4). The Medo-Persian Empire was represented by the bear (vs 5). The Greek Empire was represented by the leopard (vs 6). The Roman Empire was represented by the beast that was "dreadful and terrible" (vs 7). At the conclusion of this prophecy a significant statement is made in verses 13,14. ***Everlasting dominion that will not pass away:*** The sovereignty or kingdom reign about which Daniel spoke was certain to be established, and subsequently, would not cease until its intended time of cessation (See 1 Co 15:26-28). As opposed to the earthly kingdoms of the prophecy that were destroyed by greater earthly powers that always followed them, the heavenly sovereignty would never be destroyed. It could not be destroyed by men because it would not be "left to other people" to determine its existence (2:44). It is a sovereignty of God, not man. Because it is a sovereignty that is beyond this world, it cannot be destroyed by that which is of this world. Therefore, its existence is sure and steadfast. Its establishment and termination is not determined by the will of man. In the Daniel 2 dream, it was revealed that the kingdom would not be subject to the will of men (2:44). It would consume the authority that was displayed by all earthly kingdoms. Men on earth would submit to heavenly authority regardless of the presence of earthly kingdoms in which they lived. Those who submitted to the heavenly kingdom reign would be called out of the world by their submission. The stone about which Daniel spoke in chapter 2, that was cut out of the mountain without hands, was a prophecy of the church that was to come. The church would be the assembly of those who submitted to the kingdom reign of Deity (See comments Lk 17:20,21). In the prophecy of Daniel 2, Daniel made a definite distinction between the "kingdom" and the "stone." The stone "that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (2:35). Kingdom reign from heaven referred to God's authority that was manifested from heaven in order to consume the kingdoms of this world (See comments Mt 16:18,19). The kingdoms were consumed when men and women throughout the whole world submitted to the kingdom reign of the Son from heaven. The manifestation of God's kingdom reign on earth, therefore, was the church of the obedient. The power of the stone (the church) was in the power of the One who reigns with dominion over all things. It was not that the kingdom grew into a great institutional mountain on earth. The King and headship of the kingdom was always to be in heaven, not on earth. ***Sovereignty:*** Many translations use the word "kingdom" to refer to that which was invested in the One who ascended. Reference in the verse is not to something that would result on earth because the Son of Man was enthroned on earth. He would have dominion, glory and sovereignty. This would be the nature of His existence and reign from heaven. The church would come into existence because the Son was sovereign over all things. Since the article "the" is not in the Hebrew text before the word "sovereignty" (kingdom), the Son of Man, therefore, would be given sovereignty. As opposed to any one nation on earth, this sovereignty would be over all peoples of the world. The people on earth would become the manifestation of His sovereignty as they allowed Jesus to reign in their hearts (Lk 17:20,21). In the fulfillment of the prophecy, therefore, the church would be the visible manifestation of the sovereignty of Jesus who is presently reigning in heaven. ***Should serve Him:*** The prophecy states that all peoples should serve Him. It does not say that everyone would serve Him. The statement is in the subjunctive. What the prophecy is stating is that the Son of Man would manifest universal sovereignty. The people who would submit to that sovereignty would be obedient subjects. People

had the freedom to reject the sovereignty of Jesus. Nevertheless, He would have universal sovereignty over all things regardless of the disobedience of many. This prophecy is about the universal kingdom (sovereignty) of Jesus, of which the church would only be a part. The prophecy of Daniel 7:13,14 is clearly in the mind of Paul in Ephesians 1:20-22. The ascension of Jesus and His receiving sovereign reign is very significant. The word "principality" in Ephesians 1:20-22 refers to governments, individuals or personalities. What Paul stated in Ephesian 1:20-22 was the fulfillment of what was prophesied in Daniel 7:13,14. After His ascension, Jesus was seated at the ruling position of Deity in the heavenly realm. He now reigns over all things. The Father abdicated all rule to Him. Jesus' sovereign rule, therefore, He is above all principality, power, might, dominion and every name that is named. All things have been put under His feet (See comments Hb 2:8). Jesus is the head over all things for the sake of the church. The church is only one thing in this passage over which Jesus is head. Ephesians 1:20-22 is actually an encouragement to Christians, as Daniel 7:13,14 was an encouragement to the captive Jews during the ministry of Daniel. We should be encouraged because Jesus is head over all things for the benefit of the people of God. One thing is very evident in Ephesians 1:20-22. The sovereign reign of Jesus goes beyond the church. This was the nature of the prophecies of both Daniel 2:44 and 7:13,14. God wanted to reassure the captive Jews that the One who ascended to the Ancient of Days would take control of all kingdoms of the world. A parallel passage to Ephesians 1:20-22 that reveals the fulfillment of Daniel 7:13,14 is Philippians 2:5-11. At the time Paul wrote Philippians 2:5-11, Jesus had already been highly exalted. His authority (name) is now above all authority (Mt 28:18). This means that Jesus' sovereign rule is over everything and everyone of the material world ("those on earth"). His rule is over all angels in heaven ("those in heaven"). Also, His sovereign rule is over Satan and demons ("those under the earth") (See 1 Pt 3:22). Philippians 2:9-11 clearly manifests that Jesus' present reign is beyond the church. Philippians 2:9-11 is not talking about something that is yet in our future. After the final coming of Jesus, the earth and Satan, with his angels, will be eternally destroyed (Mt 25:41). Paul is discussing something that is present; something that is happening at this very moment as the forces of Satan are active in this world. Notice also in the Philippians 2 passage that every tongue should confess Jesus. Daniel 7:13,14 also used the subjunctive to express the fact that all should be submissive to the kingdom reign of Jesus. However, all are not submissive. There are disobedient subjects in the world. Satan and his host are continually disobedient. All the disobedient in the sovereign reign of Jesus should bow down and confess His authority. But they do not. Nevertheless, the fact that they do not bow down does not mean that Jesus is not their King. The Hebrew writer stated in Hebrews 2:8 that we do not now see everything subjected to Jesus. We will not visibly see everything subjected to Jesus until the end of time (1 Co 15:26-28). In reference to events today, it may seem that things are out of control in reference to the kingdom reign of Jesus. However, when He comes again, it will be clearly manifested that all things are under His control when He brings judgment upon all who have opposed Him. ***Not be destroyed:*** Daniel spoke of the sovereignty that would come after his lifetime. It would be "everlasting." It would not be a sovereignty that would be subject to the terminating forces that press upon earthly kingdoms. In other words, God's sovereign reign is not subject to the forces of worldly kingdoms. His kingdom is sure and steadfast ("everlasting") and would not pass away as did the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The kingdom that originates from heaven will not be destroyed as earthly kingdoms are destroyed. It will not be destroyed because it is a sovereign reign that is manifested from heaven. And since it originates from heaven, earthly kingdoms have no influence over it.

7:15-25 ***The fourth beast that was different:*** The primary focus of Daniel's vision was the fourth beast, the Roman Empire. It was during the existence of this kingdom that God would accomplish the establishment of the sovereignty that would be given to the One who ascended to the Ancient of Days (See comments Rv 13). Since the event of verses 13,14 took place during the time of the existence of the Roman kings, we would assume that the fourth beast refers to the Roman kingdom. However, some Bible students believe that reference was to the time that followed the breakup of the Greek kingdom. The ten horns were the ten rulers that followed the death of Alexander the Great. It is assumed, therefore, that the little horn was Antiochus Epiphanes. Though there is some merit to this view, the contextual support in view of verses 13,14 would lead us to conclude that the Roman Empire is in view. ***Make war with the saints and prevailed against them:*** In verse 21 it is stated that the horn made war with the saints. We would link this statement to Revelation 13:7 where John wrote of the sea beast that rose out of the populations of the world. *"And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them."* Revelation 13 was a prophecy in reference to the Roman Empire persecuting the early church (See comments Rv 7 & 13). We would thus link Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 in concluding that the two contexts speak of the Roman Empire. ***The saints ... will take the kingdom:*** In the vision of chapter 7, emphasis was on the dominion of the kingdoms of the world. Emphasis here is on the saints who reign over the kingdoms (See comments Rm 5:17). The saints reign in life because of the Son of Man, King Jesus, who was given authority over all things (Mt 28:12; Ep 1:20-22). ***Ten horns:*** We could view this metaphorically, not ten literal kings in succession. The number "ten" was symbolic of completeness, and thus the kingdom of Rome would exert its complete power over the kingdoms of its era and throughout its domain. If understood as ten Caesars of the Roman Empire, then they were the reigning force who led Rome against God's people (See comment Rv 13). ***Another will rise:*** From the reigning power of the Roman Empire would arise an arrogant leadership that would be different from the preceding "kings" of the Empire. This leadership would be Paul's "son of destruction" (2 Th 2:3,4). This would be the "mystery of lawlessness" that was at work during the time Paul wrote (2 Th 2:7). It would be the "lawless one" that was soon to be re-

vealed after Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (2 Th 2:8). ***Wear down the saints:*** The Roman Empire wore down the saints through persecution. Caesar Nero persecuted the church as a personal vendetta. However, after him came Caesar Domitian who made Christians enemies of the state. Subsequently, the Roman Empire launched state persecution against Christians because they would not submit to Caesar as Lord. They were considered insurrectionists, and thus labeled as enemies of the state. ***Change times and laws:*** When Caesar declared himself as lord, he instituted Roman religion. The state became antichrist by exalting itself through Caesar to assume the worship of the subjects. This put Christians in direct conflict with the state religion. However, they had to serve God and not the religious laws that were bound on all Roman citizens through the power of the state (See comments At 4:28:29). ***Time and times and half a time:*** There is no emphasis here on calendar time, but on a symbolic period of resistance to the saints that would eventually come to an end. The antichrist efforts would at first be for "a time." This is a vague statement with no specific calendar time in mind. Emphasis would be on a gradual beginning of the persecution against the saints that would later turn into what would seem to be success ("times"). The "times" does not explain the duration of the persecution, but does assume a termination. The "half a time" would be the collapse or end. The lawless one would have a beginning and an ending. It would be a time when the persecution of the saints would run its course, and then come to an end.

7:26-28 ***The court:*** See comments Rv 17:14. Once the antichrist had completed his reign of terror over the saints, the saints would have the final victory, for they reigned in life with the victorious Christ (See comments Rm 5:17). ***All dominions will serve and obey Him:*** See comments Ph 2:5-11; Ep 1:20-22 (Compare Mt 5:10).

The Destiny Of Israel
(8:1 – 12:13)

Outline: (1) Vision of the ram and the goat (8:1-27), (2) Daniel's intercession for Israel (9:1-27), (3) Daniel's vision of Israel's future (10:1 – 12:13)

Chapter 8
VISION OF THE RAM & THE GOAT

Chapter 7 completes the Aramaic message of the book of Daniel. Chapters 1–7 were addressed to the Gentile world in which the people of God lived. Beginning with chapter 8, however, the address is in Hebrew and was addressed to the people of God who were on their way through the struggles of international turmoil that would affect them in the land of Palestine until the coming of the Messiah. This, and the following chapters, were written in order to bring encouragement to the Jews, reassuring them that God had all things under control in order to bring the Messiah into the world in the last days of national Israel.

8:1-4 This vision was seen by Daniel two years after his vision of the four kingdoms in chapter 7 (7:1). Shushan was the summer palace of the Persian kings. It was about 250 kilometers north of Babylon. ***A ram:*** Contrary to the wild beasts that were used to portray the kingdoms of previous dreams and visions, this vision conveys its message through the imagery of domesticated animals as a ram and male goat. The two horns of the ram were Cyrus (the higher) and Darius. Cyrus expanded the Medo-Persian Empire and Darius was a provincial king over Babylon. ***No beast could stand before him:*** No kingdom was able to withstand the expansion of the Medo-Persian Empire.

8:5-8 Though the Medo-Persian Empire had expanded to encompass many conquered nations, the Greeks, led by Alexander the Great, pushed as a charging male goat eastward into Medo-Persian territory. ***A notable horn:*** Alexander the Great. ***The great horn was broken:*** Alexander died unexpectedly and prematurely at the age of thirty-three. His kingdom was then divided between his four generals. Lysimachus took the territories of Thrace and Bithynia, and possibly all of Asia Minor. Cassander took Macedonia and Greece. Seleucus took Syria, Babylonia and the east territories. Ptolemy took Egypt, and struggled for Palestine and Arabia Petraea.

8:9-12 ***A little horn:*** From one of the four horns, a little horn strangely sprouted and became great. But it became great in evil, not good. The little horn arrogantly exalted itself against God and His saints. Most Bible students assume that this was the eighth king of the Seleucidae dynasty of Syria, Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus Epiphanes was a man of great abilities, but ruthless and cruel. Antiochus took the title of "Epiphanes," meaning "the illustrious one." He extended his power through conflict with Ptolemy Philometor in order to take Egypt, as well as Persia and Media. His strategic conquest led him to think of himself as a great one, and thus he exalted himself. ***The pleasant land:*** Palestine (See 11:16; Jr 3:19; Ez 20:6). ***Cast down ... the stars to the ground:*** If we could use the word "stars" as a metaphor, reference could be to the seed of Abraham (Gn 15:5; 22:17). We would conclude that God's people would be cast down by Antiochus Epiphanes. ***Magnified himself:*** He magnified himself to the point of disgracing anything that pertained to God and His work among the Jews. When Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Palestine, he eventually terminated the daily sacrifices at the altar (See 1 Maccabees 1:45,46). He offered a swine on the altar and poured the broth of the swine offering around the altar. ***Given over ... the regular sacrifice:*** The place of sacrifice was given over by God to Antiochus who offered sacrifice to the pagan god Zeus. The text indicates that God allowed these actions to be taken by Antiochus, though we are not told why. It may have been because of some tendencies toward apostasy among the Jews. The termination of the temple sacrifices by Antiochus, therefore, may have been allowed by God in order that the religious fervor of the Jews be restored. Whatever the case, the sacrifices were eventually restored and the faithful remained unto the coming of the Messiah, which would take place about 165 years after this event.

8:13,14 The conversation here is between two angelic beings. Daniel listened in on their conversation. The conversation naturally reflected the feelings of those who were personally involved in the wicked aggression of Antiochus Epiphanes against God's people. The question would also be

the natural response of those who were enduring the persecution. ***2,300 days:*** The Hebrew text literally refers to 2,300 evenings and mornings. If reference is to the two sacrifices made every day, then the number of days would be half the 2,300, or 1,150 days. ***The sanctuary will be cleansed:*** After Antiochus made havoc of the temple, he returned to his homeland in Syria. However, after three years he returned and set up an image of a pagan god in the temple. Jerusalem was laid waste for over six years. For three of those years the temple was considered defiled. It was not until the revolt of Judas Maccabaeus, and the restoration of the temple sacrifices, that the temple was cleansed. Somewhere during this time was the 2,300 days, or 1,150 days, which period of time is difficult to determine. The cleansing of the temple and restoration of the daily sacrifices occurred on December 25, 167 B.C.

8:15-22 ***Gabriel:*** Gabriel was the special messenger who was sent to reveal the meaning of the vision (8:16; 9:21; Lk 1:19,26). ***Make this man understand:*** Without the aid of God's angel, Daniel could not have understood the vision because he lived before the fulfillment of the events. If the book of Daniel were written after these events had taken place, then Daniel could have understood. The fact that the vision had to be explained to him is evidence that the book of Daniel was not written as a history book, but a book of prophetic history. ***The time of the end:*** The context will not allow us to understand this "end" as the end of the world. Reference in the historical context was to that which would transpire in reference to the end of the sacrifices at the altar in Jerusalem. Some Bible students have assumed that this end of the sacrifices of the saints of God is typical of the end of the world. It is assumed that there will yet come in the future before the coming of the Christ, a time when the living sacrifices of the saints will come to an end. When few saints exist in a world that was created specifically for the production of saints who would transition into eternity, then the world would have lost its purpose for existence, and subsequently be brought to an end. But in the historical context of the visions of Daniel, we must view the fulfillment of the prophecies in reference to God's people in the Old Testament, not God's people at the end of time. God's purpose with Israel was to bring His people to the cross of Jesus. The vehicle for doing this was the nation of Israel. When the purpose for Israel was accomplished, then the Holy Spirit would take Christians through further revelation to the end of the world. But at the time Daniel lived, God was preparing His people to accept the end of national Israel and the temple sacrifices that would come in the future. Therefore, we cannot rob the Jews of the encouragement of these prophecies that were given specifically to them in order to take them to the end of national Israel in Christ (Gl 3:26-29). ***Last end of the indignation:*** This statement seems to define the "end" mentioned in verse 17. It thus signified the end that Antiochus made of the sacrifices at the altar, for the historical context is in reference to the Medo-Persians, Greeks, and the history that followed the death of Alexander the Great. Reference is not to an end of our time today.

8:23-27 ***Latter time of their kingdom:*** This would be the last times of the reign of those who followed the Greek Empire when it was split into four divisions, which divisions were ruled by those who followed Alexander after his death. ***King of fierce appearance:*** Antiochus Epiphanes. ***Not by his own power:*** He will be allowed by God to carry out his desecration of the altar at the temple and termination of the daily sacrifices. ***Broken without human means:*** God put an end to the tyranny of Antiochus by causing his death. ***Seal up the vision:*** Though the principle nations were revealed to Daniel, the specifics of the fulfillment were not revealed. Only when the fulfillment came would people understand the meaning of the vision. It is for this reason that the fulfillment would not refer to the end of the world. At the end of the world, the saints will be delivered from this world, and thus the fulfillment would have no encouragement to those who were standing in the presence of God. Since the book of Daniel was written for the purpose of encouraging the Jews who would experience the fulfillment of the vision, then we must remain within the historical context of the Jewish people in order to determine the fulfillment of the vision. When these events were being fulfilled during the invasion and desecration of the temple by Antiochus, the Jews who were actually experiencing the fulfillment would gain encouragement by realizing that God had all things under control, and thus they must wait for the end, which end would take place when the Messiah came. The end in this context, therefore, would refer to the end of Israel in Christ (Gl 3:26-29). When Israel came to an end in Christ, it was the end of almost two thousand years of Jewish history that began with Abraham. The fullness of times had been completed (Gl 4:4), and thus the consummation of the ages was fulfilled in Christ. To the Jews, the end of Israel was almost like the end of the world to a culture of people who had experienced over two thousand years of history as the chosen people of God.

Chapter 9
DANIEL'S INTERCESSION FOR ISRAEL

9:1-3 ***First year of Darius:*** A great change had been made in international affairs among the nations. The fall of the magnificent Babylonian Empire had just occurred. Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, was killed (5:30,31). The Medes and Persians had taken over all the former Babylonian territories and were expanding the Medo-Persian Empire south into Egypt, to the east and to the west. In the midst of these kingdom transitions, Daniel was surely apprehensive, as well as all the Jewish captives who lived within the territories of the former Babylonian Empire. They were nearing the end of the seventy years of captivity that was prophesied by Jeremiah. Darius was aging, and soon all military and civil authority would be shifted to Cyrus within two years of the date given here. It was thus a time for intercessory prayer and confession on behalf of the people of God. ***Jeremiah ... seventy years in the desolations:*** Regardless of the international turmoil that was taking place, Daniel focused on the revelations of God that were made through Jeremiah concerning the time of the captivity (Jr 25:11).

9:4-14 Daniel prayed for the nation. He included himself with an entire people who had transgressed the conditions of the Sinai covenant that they had with God. They had reaped

the consequences of their sin, and thus with a repentant spirit, they were on their knees asking God for forgiveness and restoration to the promised land. ***God who keeps the covenant:*** God had established a covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. ***We have sinned:*** When God established the covenant with Israel, He told the nation that if they broke their conditions for keeping the covenant, He would drive them from the land into captivity (See Lv 26:14-35). However, if they would confess their transgressions and apostasy, then He would restore them to the land (Lv 26:40-45). Daniel was living in the time of the restoration (See comments Er & Ne). As a man of God, he had the responsibility, as the other prophets as Ezekiel by the River Chebar and Jeremiah in Jerusalem, who were contemporary with him, to call the people to repentance. It was a time, therefore, to call the people to repentance and remembrance of the promise of God that He would restore them to the land (See Jr 29:10). It was a short time after this intercessory prayer, that Cyrus freed the captives and allowed them to return to their lands (2 Ch 36:21-23). Daniel was at this time an old man. He had experienced the first captivity of the southern kingdom of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. And now, he was experiencing the fulfillment of prophecy that God had promised that the repentant captives could return to the land (See comments Er & Ne). ***Iniquity ... wickedly ... rebelled ... departed:*** Israel had done all that was necessary to reap the consequence of an apostate nation. They had rejected the culture of righteousness that was given to them through the law of God. They had adopted the wickedness of the idolatrous nations around them, and then went beyond what the nations did in behaving wickedly. Once they forgot the law of God, there was no end to the wickedness to which they went (Hs 4:6). ***The Lord has ... brought it upon us:*** God was just in bringing national calamity upon Israel because of their apostasy. They had forsaken the very purpose for which He had given them birth, that is, to bring the Savior into the world. Because they forsook the purpose for their existence, they were taken from the land. From those who were taken captive, God intended to restore only a remnant through which He would bring the Messiah into the world.

9:15-19 This prayer of Daniel manifested his leadership of the people. It was a call for the people to repent. Restoration to the land was the reward for their repentance, for within a short time King Cyrus would allow the first captives the opportunity to return to their homelands. Rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the temple would be the symbolic act that would identify the reestablishment of the people in the land. Though they would never again enjoy the freedom of being an independent nation, Israel as a people would through the remnant consolidate the identity of Israel for the fulfillment of prophecies that were made to the fathers (See Gn 12:1-3). Though God was at the very time this prayer was made working to restore the remnant, Daniel's prayer stirred the people to confess the former wickedness of their fathers. He encouraged them to repent, and then be ready at the call of God to return to the land. It was a time of anticipation on the part of the repentant Israelites who were at this time in history experiencing the fulfillment of prophecy in reference to their return to the land.

9:20-23 God could have revealed to Daniel's mind the answer to his prayer. But in this case, God wanted to give Daniel understanding through a personal messenger, the angel Gabriel (See Lk 1:19,26). The sending of the angel was for his strengthening (Lk 22:43). Daniel needed to know that his prayer was in the process of being answered. God was working at that very moment through King Cyrus to release the captives and allow them to return to Palestine.

9:24-27 ***Seventy weeks:*** A week stood for a year, and thus the fulfillment of the seventy years of captivity of which Jeremiah spoke had come to an end (Jr 25:11). ***For your people and for your holy city:*** This statement identifies the ones to whom the message of this context is addressed. We must keep in mind that Cyrus was about to release the Jews in order that they return to the land of Palestine. Led by Zerubbabel, a group of 40,000 captives would return in 536 B.C. This group would be followed by another group in 457 B.C. that was led by Ezra. Nehemiah would lead another group to Palestine in 444 B.C. All would return for the purpose of reestablishing the identity of Israel. To do this, they rebuilt the city of Jerusalem and the temple (See comments Ne). All this was beginning to transpire at the time Daniel uttered his prayer. However, the Messianic era had already been introduced in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in 2:44 and Daniel's vision in 7:13,14. These returnees saw this destiny in their return. In order for the Messiah to come, they had to reestablish Israel in the land of promise. ***Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks:*** The phrase "seven weeks" is literally "sevens" in the Hebrew text, referring to the symbolic meaning of the number "seven," the numeric symbol for complete. In view of verse 27, "until the consummation that is determined," we would conclude that this is a prophecy that takes us beyond the work of the Jews to rebuild the city and reestablish the identity of Israel. Since the purpose of the existence of Israel was to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world, then the beginning of the fulfillment of these promises to the fathers would be interwoven with the fulfillment of the prophecy of Israel's return to the land. The symbolic seven weeks would bring to an end the redemptive work of God through Israel. This would be the consummation of the purpose for which God brought forth the nation of Israel from Egyptian captivity. The Blessing that would bless all nations would naturally be included with a prophecy concerning Israel's march back to the promise land in order that God's promise to Abraham be consummated (See comments Gn 12:1-3). There are thus six prophetic statements made in this context in reference to the consummation of the redemptive work of God through the Messiah (1) ***To finish the transgression:*** When Jesus died on the cross, He made a sufficient sacrifice for all time for all men (See comments Hb 7:26,27). (2) ***To make an end of sins:*** Those who have been born again are not walking in sin, for the blood of Jesus cleanses them of all sin (See comments 1 Jn 1:7; 3:9; compare comments Jr 31:31-34). (3) ***To make reconciliation for iniquity:*** Through the Messiah, we have been reconciled to the Father (See comments 2 Co 5:17-19). (4) ***To bring in everlasting righteousness:*** The church is brought into the eternal righteousness of God, for the church has become His people

and He is the God of the members (See comments 2 Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1-3,22,23,27). (5) ***To seal up the vision and prophecy:*** In Jesus all the prophecies concerning the redemptive work of the prophets were fulfilled (See comments Lk 24:25-27). (6) ***To anoint the Most Holy:*** The Messiah, the Anointed of God (the Christ), was determined to fulfill all prophecies concerning the redemptive work for the salvation of man (7:13,14; see comments At 2:36-38; 4:27,28). ***Destroy the city and the sanctuary:*** There are numerous speculations among Bible students concerning the "seven weeks" and the symbolism concerning the conclusion of national Israel. However, in view of what transpired with the redemptive work of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, we would conclude that Gabriel was here revealing to Daniel the finality of national Israel with the birth of spiritual Israel, the church. National Israel would be summed up with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). There is no reason to conclude that Gabriel revealed to the Jews at this time anything in time beyond the coronation of the Son of Man who ascended to the right hand of God and was given dominion, glory and sovereignty over all things (See 2:44; 7:13,14). Once the finality of national Israel was concluded with the fulfillment of all prophecies concerning Jesus (Lk 24:25-27), then we would assume that there were no more prophecies to be fulfilled in reference to the redemptive work of Jesus. When the time came, Jesus would personally speak of His final coming at the end of time. But for Daniel's audience, this was a subject that was reserved for those who experienced the first coming of Jesus in His ministry to redeem the world. There would have been no reason to speak to the captive Jews concerning things that would happen over 2,500 years—and still counting—after the time the statements of Daniel 9 were made and written. We must always keep Luke 24:27 in mind where Jesus said that all prophecies concerning Himself had been fulfilled at the time He concluded His redemptive ministry at the cross.

Chapter 10
DANIEL'S VISION OF ISRAEL'S FUTURE

The last three chapters should be considered as one oracle from God that was delivered to Daniel. There is no break in the narrative as revelation was given to Daniel concerning the future events that would transpire in the history of Israel. The interpreter must keep in mind that God was bringing Israel to its finality in Christ (Gl 3:26-29). Beginning with Abraham, two thousand years of history were being brought to an end. The consummation of Israel was in the cross of the Messiah. In order to prepare the minds of the Jewish community that would experience this tremendous paradigm shift in their thinking and society, God through these prophecies of Daniel, laid the foundation for their change in thinking, and thus their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah when He came. Interpreters, therefore, have no right to rob the Jews, who lived during the ministry of Jesus and the early church, of the fulfillment of these things that God said would transpire during their lives. We should grow in faith because of the fulfillment of these prophecies in Jesus (Rm 10:17).

10:1-3 ***A message was revealed to Daniel:*** This was a direct revelation to Daniel. It did not come in a dream, but in a vision. It came for the purpose of giving comfort to the people of God to whom it was initially given. It was comfort through fulfilled prophecy that would sustain them through the coming years of turmoil they would experience in their homeland until the coming of the Messiah. The revelation was concerning things that would happen to Daniel's people, the returned Jews, in the last days of national Israel. Peter was in those last days when he stood up on the Pentecost of A.D. 30 and stated that the prophecy of Joel 2:28 was fulfilled in the last days with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (See comments At 2:16,17).

10:4-9 ***A certain man clothed in linen:*** John, the apostle, had a similar experience in vision in Revelation 1:10-20 (See comments). The similarities of the two visions are too close to ignore the fact that what both men of God saw was the Son of God. Daniel saw the preincarnate Son. John saw the glorified Son. The metaphors used in both narratives depict the glorious nature of the Son of Man. To Daniel, He was a messenger of comfort for the future. To John, He was a messenger of comfort to the church concerning their victory over the oppression of the Roman state. ***There remained no strength in me:*** When a normal human being is placed in the presence of God, he collapses to the ground. Both Daniel and John had the same experience (See Rv 1:17). It is simply not possible for frail humanity to experience direct contact with Deity without a tremendous emotional and physical response of humility and worship.

10:10-14 ***Greatly beloved:*** No greater words could a man hear from God, which words would bear the meaning at the final judgment, *"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Mt 25:34). ***Discipline yourself:*** Daniel had been spiritually disciplining himself through fasting for three weeks (vss 2,3). In response to his discipline through fasting, an angel was sent to him (See comments At 13:1-3). ***The prince ... of Persia withstood me twenty-one days:*** Though Daniel possibly knew what this meant, this confrontation has not been revealed to us. Whatever the situation, Michael, the archangel, intervened. He did so for the purpose of God in working among the nations to bring about His eternal plan of redemption. ***Michael:*** Michael is the angelic being who would contend with the Devil (Jd 9). He is the one who makes war with those nations who set themselves against the work of God (Rv 12:7-9). In this context, he was working for the people of God, the children of Israel.

10:15-21 God was working in the affairs of the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek Empire. He was working in a manner by which He could bring Israel again into their homeland, and then preserve them unto the coming of the Messiah. Though Cyrus allowed the Israelites to return to the land, their residence after arrival was in constant turmoil. They were opposed by the local residents who were left there after the captivity of 722/21 B.C. (the Assyrian captivity) and 586 B.C. (the Babylonian captivity). They were oppressed by the Greeks who eventually expanded the Greek Empire into Palestine. Palestine was under the control of Medes and Persians until it was taken over by the Greeks who were led by Alexan-

der the Great. After the death of Alexander, and the breaking up of the Greek Empire, the remnants of Alexander's generals, the Ptolemies and Seleucidae continued to struggle over Palestine. Throughout these years of conflict, therefore, God's work through His angelic beings was in conflict with earthly kings who continually caused trouble for the people of God. It was a time when Michael and his angelic hosts were at war with the forces of evil that were manifested through wicked kings on earth (Compare Rv 12:7-9).

Chapter 11

It is very encouraging to witness God's work throughout history with the nation of Israel. To begin our understanding of this work, we must remember that the purpose of God, in the 586 B.C. Babylonian captivity of Israel, was to allow the Jews to have a great deal of time in captivity to think over how and why they ended up there. They needed time to consider the fact that as a consequence of their apostasy from God, they had given up forever their right as an independent nation in Palestine. During the time of their captivity, they certainly remembered all that God had promised them as a chosen nation at the foot of Mount Sinai. But in the promises, came warnings. Unfortunately, they ignored the warnings. Everything that God had warned them at Mount Sinai had come to pass, and thus, they found themselves in the captivity of a foreign nation. Therefore, in remembering the fact that they had turned from God and ran after gods they imagined in their minds, it was a time for repentance.

One of the saddest consequences of their apostasy was that they would indeed return and rebuild the temple, but the land of Palestine would forever be under the possession and control of foreign powers. Their independence as a free nation within the borders of Palestine was forever gone.

After a thousand years in the land of promise after Sinai, and then into captivity, first by the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C., and then by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., God had cancelled His land promise that He had established with the nation at the foot of Sinai. He would only restore the Israelites to the land upon their repentance in captivity, which He did because they did. Nevertheless, their seventy years of captivity was now coming to a close during the days of both Ezekiel and Daniel. As Jeremiah had prophesied, they were now on the brink of being delivered from captivity and returning to Palestine. However, the land would continue to be under the control of foreign powers throughout history (See comments Jr 25).

In the following years after the Daniel 11 prophecy was made, Israel was reminded that the land of Palestine would continue to be under the control of a foreign power, that is, and at first, by the Medo-Persian Empire. At the time Daniel prophesied, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 44:28 was upon them (See comments). It was now time for Daniel to be brought forward in order to reveal that the returnees had some troubling history before them, even though they would return to the land of promise.

When the Jews eventually returned, their settlement in the land of promise would not be as they might have imagined. Throughout the centuries to come after their return, the control of Palestine would go from one empire to another. In 536 B.C., the Jews returned while the land was under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire. However, God, through visions, revealed to both Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon that the land of Palestine would go from the Babylonian Empire, and then to the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, and finally rest in the control of the Roman Empire (See Dn 2 & 7). The descendants of the initial returnees were destined to endure through all this international conflict until they would eventually find peace of mind in the coming of the Messiah.

From the time the captives were released from the Medo-Persian Empire by Cyrus, to the "fullness of time" in the Roman Empire (See comments Gl 4:4), there would be constant turmoil in Palestine. So in order to prepare the posterity of Israel mentally for this turmoil, God revealed to the Jews who would inhabit the land, the prophetic statements of Daniel 11.

The reason Daniel laid out four centuries of events beforehand as to what would historically transpire in the land before the arrival of the Messiah, was that God wanted His people to know that no matter what may happen in the unstable world of international conflicts, He had everything under control. Therefore, the Jewish returnees must never consider at any time that anything was out of the control of God, though each generation of Jews had to endure great turmoil. In the midst of their turmoil, they must continually read the document of Daniel over and over again for encouragement. In so doing they would be grateful to God for giving them, through Daniel, a political road map to the time the Messiah would show up with eternal peace.

We must not steal this prophecy of hope in Daniel 11 away from the posterity of God's people who had to endure the historical turmoil of Palestine for four hundred years until the coming of the Messiah. Therefore, we must not apply the events that were prophesied specifically in Daniel 11 to the returnees to our own circumstances today. To do so would be prophecy theft. But we are not "prophecy thieves" who would rob a profound prophecy of hope from those to whom it originally referred during their four centuries of national turmoil until the Messiah showed up on the scene. As Christians, we have our own message of hope in the New Testament concerning the coming again of the Son of God.

We do not have to steal a prophetic message of hope from those who had to endure horrendous struggles in Palestine for four hundred years before the incarnation of the Son of God. Those saints of God of Israel struggled in order that the gospel be revealed. But for ourselves, by living with the revealed gospel in our past, we enjoy encouragement by reading about their faithfulness while they survived through international struggles. And now we know why God called Daniel to reveal these encouraging prophecies to Israel, and had them written in a book for our benefit.

The prophetic details of the history of Daniel 11 are so historically accurate that some have speculated that this record of Daniel's revelation was actually a recording of history, not a prophecy of future events. However, because the prophecy was from the Holy Spirit, we must argue that the historical events of the prophecy were a meticulous outline of historical

events that would transpire until the Old Testament dispensation came to a close as a new dispensation of God's people was about to open. It was a prophecy of the consummation of national Israel in order to make way for the "Israel" of Christ (the church) in whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile (See comments Rm 9:6; Gl 3:26-29).

By knowing the international turmoil Israel would face after the captivity, the faithful Jews could be reassured that God had all things under control, and thus was working His plan to fulfill the purpose for which He called Abraham, and subsequently, built a great nation from his seed (See comments Gn 12:1-4). The returned Jews must understand that no conflict among the nations would detour this work of God to use the nation of Israel to carry out His eternal plan to bring the Redeemer into the world. National Israel would be consummated only when God had accomplished His purpose by sending His Son into the world. National Israel was only a social vehicle that would usher into the world the One whom God would use to usher people of faith, as Abraham, out of this world. The existence of the nation of Israel, their captivity to inspire repentance, their return to the land, and finally, the coming of the redemption of the Christ, was only one link in the fulfillment of the promise that was made in Genesis 3:15 (See comments). The nation of Israel was only a special preservation of people in order to divert another world apostasy as that which was identified in Genesis 6:5.

In the context of Daniel 11, there is a general division of thought between verses 2-35 and verse 36 onward. Our secular historical records of the events follow the first section of prophecy, but from verse 36, and especially from verse 40 onward, it is difficult to follow the exact course of history of this prophetic picture. As the Jews lived through these events, they understood what was prophesied as they connect the dots between Daniel's prophecy and the fulfillment of every event.

The first section (Dn 11:2-35) takes us to the middle of the second century B.C., in particular to the year of the desecration of the temple in 165 B.C. The second section (Dn 11:36 and onward) is a prophetic picture of events that surround the kingdom of God until the consummation of the ages in the coming of the Messiah and the eventual destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See Rv 13).

The historical details of Daniel's prophecy are given in order to reassure God's people in the interbiblical period that He is not unmindful of the particular struggles they had to endure. The struggles they endured are also for the benefit of the saints in any generation who also live through international struggles. We conclude that God is also working in our world today as He worked in the world of the Jewish saints in order to bring the Messiah and Savior again into this world in order to take us out of this world and into our eternal home with Him in heaven. Though Daniel 11 was specifically written for the Jews who had to live through the interbiblical turmoil of international struggles between nations, we, too, often find ourselves in the midst of similar circumstances.

The prophesied details of Jewish history throughout the next four centuries after the return of the captives would eventually lead to the end of national Israel. At the time Daniel prophesied, Israel already had a thousand years of history, and thus, the Jews must understand that in their future, nationhood was not a permanent social structure for them as a nation. Their existence as a nation was only transitory until their purpose was consummated through the incarnation of the Son of God into this world. God, through Daniel, therefore, reassured the Israelites that something better was coming. In fact, their struggles through the next four centuries were an encouraging hope that God had sometime better for them than a small struggling nation of people trapped in a small parcel of land called Palestine.

In former prophecies of the Old Testament there was always a need to give specific details in the prophecies simply because such details were relevant to the purpose for which the prophecies were given. People would not understand the fulfillment if there were no historical details by which they could identify the fulfillment of the prophecies. But with the prophecy of Daniel 11, God's purpose was somewhat different. He wanted His people to identify the specific fulfillments of particular aspects of the prophecy in order that they might have a "prophetic countdown" to the coming of the Messiah.

As God took His people to the consummation of their very existence as a nation, the Jews needed to understand what was actually happening in their history as they neared the last days of national Israel. As the Jews transitioned through the ministry of Jesus, and neared the cross event, we would assume that Satan would unleash all that he had to prevent his crushing at the cross (See Gn 3:15). But the crushing came, and then faithful Israelites had only to wait for the finality of national Israel that was also prophesied by the Messiah in Matthew 24.

Though Satan had no idea of the mystery that was to be revealed at the cross, he knew that something was up because of the nature of Daniel's prophecies – he, too, could read the Bible. He thus sought ways to destroy the identity of Israel in order to confuse the world concerning the fulfillment of the promises that were made to the Jewish fathers. If no identifiable nation of Jews existed at the time of the fulfillment of all the prophecies that were made to the Jews, then the world would mock everyone for believing such "prophetic fantasies." We would assume, therefore, that the historical details of Daniel's prophetic message were written specifically for the encouragement of the Jews who would live through these events. The fulfillment of each detail of Daniel would teach the world that God diligently works in the affairs of this world in order to accomplish the salvational destiny of His people.

We gain faith from fulfilled prophecies because we see how God faithfully worked for His people in the past. We thus assume that He is still doing the same among His people now. However, if Daniel 11 were a prophecy of things yet to come in the history of this world, **then the entire chapter would build no faith in our lives**. Our faith is strengthened when we see in Daniel 11 the futile efforts of evil that were launched on earth to detour the eternal plan of God. These efforts were against God's plan to use national Israel to bring the eternal redemptive plan of God into reality. From what we discover in the prophecies of Daniel, we can be certain that there are similar sufferings that the saints must endure today in order

for God to also bring His people into eternal glory (See Rm 8:18). Therefore, we can look back to the fulfilled prophecies of Daniel 11 and again grow in hope that God will once more bring about His promises to us.

SYRIA AND EGYPT IN CONFLICT

11:1-35 The historical events of Daniel 11:2-35 occurred primarily between Syria and Egypt. Rome enters the picture only at the end of the conflicts between these two nations. It is then that the Roman Empire became a force of evil against the saints of God (See Rv 13).

The historical literary picture of Daniel 11 begins with Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire. The literary picture continues in history to the time after the breakup of the Greek Empire that was dissolved when Alexander the Great died in 323 B.C.

Throughout its existence as an empire, twelve kings ruled over the Medo-Persian Empire. However, only three are noted here before the fourth who rose to great wealth. The first of the four was Cambyses who began to reign in 529 B.C. Pseudo-Smerdis began to reign in 522 B.C. Darius Hystaspis began to reign in 521 B.C. The fourth is believed to be Xerxes I (or Ahasuerus of Esther 1:1), who began his reign in 485 B.C.

Xerxes I stirred up his people against the Greeks. It is believed that he took more than four years to muster an army of over two and a half million men in order to march against the Greeks. But his forces were turned back by the bravery of the Greeks at the battles of Thermopylae and Salamis. The Persians' defeat in these two battles broke the back of the Empire, which was eventually overthrown during the reign of Darius III.

Alexander the Great was the mighty king who stood up to embolden the Greek Empire, and subsequently trample down the Medo-Persian Empire. Though he would briefly reign with great power and conquer many peoples, his untimely death in 323 B.C. led to the breakup of the Greek Empire into four regions. The four regions were governed by his four generals (See Dn 8:5-8).

One of these regions was given to Ptolemy Soter (***the king of the south***), who was Alexander's general who took control of Egypt. A struggle for territory followed the breakup of the Greek Empire, particularly a struggle between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucidae (***the king of the north***) who ruled the area of Asia Minor, Syria and the former territories of Babylonia and the Medo-Persian Empire territories to the east.

For about 125 years there was a struggle between the Ptolemies and the Seleucidae, which struggle involved the Jews in the land of Palestine. The Ptolemies of Egypt initially had control of Palestine and Phoenicia. However, when a Seleucidae king, Antiochus II, married the daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus, Berenice, a political alliance was made. But when Ptolemy Philadelphus died two years after the marriage, Antiochus forsook his Egyptian wife and took back his previous wife, Laodiceia. In order to have her revenge for being forsaken by Antiochus, Berenice had Antiochus murdered.

Daniel wrote: *"**Out of a branch** of her* [Berenice] *roots will one stand up"* (11:7). The struggle between the Ptolemies and the Seleucidae intensified when Berenice and her son were also eventually murdered. This led to a bloody revenge conflict that was led by her brother (1:7-9).

After Ptolemy Philadelphus came Ptolemy III, or Euergetes. In the context of Daniel 11, he was the one who came up in the place of Ptolemy Philadelphus. He made great inroads into the domain of the Syrians. During his period of reign, Egyptian power increased and Syrian power waned. Ptolemy Philadelphus sacked temples and plundered them for their idols of precious metals. He brought so much wealth back to Egypt after his campaigns that he was given the title, "Euergetes," which means "benefactor." Historians have reported that he brought back to Egypt as much as 40,000 talents of silver and as many as 2,500 idols of precious metals.

Daniel continued, *"**One will come against the realm of the king of the south**"* (11:9). This would be the Syrian King Seleucus Callinicus who reigned from 247 to 226 B.C. He conducted a campaign into Egypt, but was unsuccessful. Daniel added: *"**His sons will be stirred up**"* (11:10). The sons of Seleucus, Seleucus III and Antiochus III, sought to continue their father's efforts, but had little success. So Daniel added in prophecy: *"**And one will certainly come and overflow**"* (11:10). Seleucus III came to an untimely death, and Antiochus III became the sole king of Syria in 198 B.C., and thus continued the efforts of the father against Egypt.

Antiochus III made many great and rapid campaigns against Egypt. He conquered the Egyptian forces at Sidon, swept through Palestine, and eventually attacked the Egyptian fortress at Gaza. Unfortunately, Ptolemy Philopator of Egypt was quite indifferent to his own security and international affairs at this time, and subsequently he offered little resistance to the expansion campaigns of Antiochus. But this changed when Egypt was directly threatened. When the nation was eventually threatened by the Syrians, Ptolemy Philopator stirred the Egyptian forces against the *"**king of the north**"* (Antiochus). He gathered an army of 73,000 men and 73 elephants to launch a defensive attack against Antiochus who had an army of 72,000 men, 6,000 horses and 102 elephants.

Daniel prophesied the result of this conflict: *"**The multitude was given into his hand**"* (11:11). Though Antiochus had an advantage over the Egyptians, he eventually succumbed to the Egyptian nationalists to protect their homeland. Unfortunately, Ptolemy returned to his former life of luxury in Egypt, and thus did not take advantage of his victory over the Syrians by pursuing them into Syria. This was a fatal military mistake.

Daniel revealed what would be the consequences of not following through with his initial victory, *"**Then the king of the north will return**"* (11:13). Antiochus III was not discouraged by his initial setback with the Egyptians. Ptolemy died and the Egyptian forces were subsequently in disarray and dissension. There were various uprisings in Egypt that weakened the power of the country. The uprisings in Egypt then stirred similar uprisings among the Jews in Palestine who were led by Tobias. However, the Jewish uprisings failed in that their rebellious actions brought on them successful efforts by outside forces that led to their continued subjugation in the years to come.

Daniel revealed, *"The **king of the north** will come and cast*

up a mount" (11:15). Antiochus of Syria came and captured the well-fortified city of Sidon in northern Palestine. The recent uprising of the Jews stirred Antiochus to venture even further into Palestine. Daniel revealed that the Jews would be subjugated to the Syrians. When Antiochus took control of Palestine, he exempted Jerusalem of all taxes for three years, and then came back later to impose on them one third of their former tax responsibilities. Out of the tax money, he even sent money for the service of the temple.

Daniel prophesied, *"He will also set his face to enter with the* ***strength of his whole kingdom****"* (11:17). Verse 17 speaks of some intentions of Antiochus that he would do in reference to Palestine. The mention of these intentions reminds us that God even knows the thoughts of the hearts of men who seek to lead kingdoms on earth. No thought is hidden from His omniscience.

Daniel prophesied, *"****He will give him the daughter****"* (11:17). Antiochus did give his daughter Cleopatra in marriage to Ptolemy Epiphanes, thinking that the daughter would be loyal to her father. But he was mistaken, for Cleopatra did not betray her husband, but rather, she betrayed her father.

Daniel continued that Antiochus would *"****turn his face to the coastlands****"* (11:18). Antiochus was successful in taking the coastal cities of the Mediterranean, as well as the islands. He gained control of Asia Minor. He even took control of Thrace, which conquest was resented by the Romans. Antiochus' exploits finally came to an end in 190 B.C. when the Roman general, Lucius Scipio, delivered a defeat to the Syrian forces at a battle near Magnesia. The Romans were now on the rise in the historical theater that would later involve national Israel in Palestine.

Daniel continued that Antiochus *"****will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land****"* (11:19). After suffering a defeat at the hands of the Roman army, Antiochus went home. After Antiochus III, came the ***raiser of taxes*** who would exact tribute from controlled nations in order to satisfy Rome. This Syrian king is not identified, other than the fact that Syria owed a great amount of tribute to Rome. How this affected the Jews was that a tax collector by the name of Heliodorus exacted a great amount of taxes from the Jews.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a ***vile person,*** became the ruler of Syria. When he became the ruler of Syria, he assumed the title, "Epiphanes" (11:21). Through deceitful means he claimed the throne of Syria, and seized control of the Seleucidae kingdom in 175 B.C.

Antiochus Epiphanes, as Daniel stated, was a vile king (11:21-35). Through cunning and deceit he expanded his autocratic kingdom (11:21-24). In order to expand his kingdom, he launched attacks against Ptolemy VI Philometor of Egypt (11:25-28). In launching these attacks against Egypt, the people of God in Palestine were caught in the middle of this international struggle (11:29-35).

Antiochus Epiphanes poured out his indignation against the Jews, terminating the daily sacrifices in Jerusalem and desecrating the temple. He placed the image of a pagan god in the temple. He stopped the practice of Jewish ceremonial laws, murdered mothers, and crucified men who practiced circumcision. Though many Jews were subjugated during this era, and thus subjected to compromise their faith, there were those who resisted, specifically a strong-hearted Jew by the name Mattathias.

THE JEWISH WARS

Mattathias began a rebellion against the Syrians. When Mattathias died, his son, Judas, continued the desires of his father by leading the rebellion against Antiochus. Judas adopted the military strategy of attack and withdraw, a guerrilla type of warfare that earned him the title, "the hammer" (or, Maccabee).

It took Judas and his men only three years to eventually defeat the Syrian forces of Antiochus in Palestine, and thus restore the temple ceremonies. Specifically, in restoring the temple ceremonies, he cleansed the altar on December 25, 165 B.C. This "cleansing" continues to be celebrated by the Jews today as the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah.

From this time, the descendants of the Maccabees, who were subsequently called the Hasmoneans, were established as the leaders of the Jews until the time the Romans took possession of Palestine in 63 B.C. Daniel prophesied what would result from the testing of the Jews throughout this period of national conflict with outside powers. It was throughout this period of history that those who trusted in God remain strong. The faithful leaders during this struggle became the heroes of Jewish culture. Their examples of strength in times of conflict and uncertainty ushered the small community of God's people to the end of Israel in Christ (See comments Gl 3:26-29). Though this small group of Israelites never took possession of the land of Palestine, at least they restored in a small way, through the restoration of the temple, a sense of freedom of faith (See Ez & Ne).

Eventually, when the faithful were transferred unto their final leader, King Jesus (Cl 1:13), it was time to terminate the national aspirations of the Jews that brought them out of captivity and to the feet of King Jesus. For this reason, God knew that radical Jews needed a visual demonstration that He had accomplished with purpose through national Israel. This demonstration took place in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and national Israel by the Romans, just as was prophesied by prophets as Daniel, and then by Jesus (See Mt 24).

Daniel spoke of the coming of the Messiah, *"****It is yet for an appointed time****"* (11:35). In this historical context, God determined the time of the rise and fall of kingdoms. He determined the time when He would bring the Messiah into the world. Through the turmoil that transpired in these last days of national Israel, God was upholding national Israel through which He would bring the Messiah into the world. This meant, however, that the Messiah would come in the last days of national Israel, and subsequently fulfill the purpose for which Israel was called into existence (See Gn 12:1-4; At 2:16,17). The revelation of the Messiah would come only when the fullness of times was completed, which times came when a babe was born in Bethlehem within two years before the death of King Herod the Great in 4 B.C. (See Comments Gl 4:4).

Preceding the coming of the Messiah, there was one who came in the wilderness of Judea who connected all the dots between prophecy and fulfillment, and thus proclaimed, *"Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand"* (Mt 3:2). And then another after him, the Messiah, came preaching, ***"The time is fulfilled** and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel"* (Mk 1:15). Millennia of God's work was coming together and being consummated.

RISE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

11:36-45 In the context of Daniel 11:36-45, Daniel wrote, ***"Prosper until the indignation is accomplished"*** (11:36). The end of the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes came with the rise of the Roman Empire. What begins to arise in the historical background during these days would be the fourth kingdom of the prophecy of Daniel 2 (See comments 2:44). This was the rise of the beast that was "dreadful and terrible" of Daniel's vision of Daniel 7 (See 7:11-18). This would be the Roman Empire, during which Empire the beginning of the kingdom reign of the Messiah would be announced by Peter on the A.D. 30 Pentecost of Acts 2. The rise of the Roman Empire, the beast that was "dreadful and terrible," would be the occasion for the consummation of national Israel. So if one were a faith-driven Jew, it was good news. But if one were a nationalists Jew, it was bad news.

The Roman Empire would eventually be an empire that would set Roman state government and religion against the work of God. This Empire would become antichrist (against Christ), and subsequently be described as such in the book of Revelation (See Rv 13). This would be the Empire of sin that would exalt itself through autocratic Caesars who claimed to be deity (See 2 Th 2:3,4).

Nevertheless, the Roman Empire continued to expand regardless of the narcissistic desires of some of its Caesars. As history marched the Empire into the coming years after Christ, the majority of the citizens became "Christian." By the fourth century, the Christian influence in the Empire became so strong that Caesar Constantine brought relief to the Christian citizenship of the Empire with the signing of the edicts of Toleration (A.D. 311) and Milan (A.D. 313).

Of the Roman Empire, Daniel prophesied that it would be the ***god of fortresses*** (11:38). Rome was an empire that initially trusted in its great military strength to go forth and conquer. The arrogant military leaders of the Empire were not intimidated by the strongest armies. Daniel spoke of them as a ***strange god***. The beast of Revelation 13:11 was Roman state religion that eventually brought the Roman state into conflict with the saints of God, for the saints would not bow down and call Caesar lord (See Rv 13:11-18).

Then Daniel prophesied concerning ***the time of the end*** (11:40). In the context of the history of this prophecy, **this statement must refer to the consummation of the Jewish dispensation**. Peter stood up in the time of the end of national Israel, in the last days of the Jewish state, and announced for the first time in history that there was a new King who was reigning from heaven with all authority (See At 2:16-38). God's unique national Sinai covenant with Israel was terminated with the nailing of the Sinai law to the cross with His Son (See Rm 7:1-4). The Jewish state, as Jesus prophesied, would subsequently be physically terminated in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24).

As many people today, many Jews at the time of the fulfillment of Daniel 11, as well as with other Old Testament prophecies concerning their fulfillment, did not fully appreciate the prophecies concerning the consummation of national Israel. At least they could not accept this fact that had been prophesied by Daniel several centuries before the end that came in A.D. 70 (See Dn 2 & 7). However, when the end came, everyone at the time needed to know that the fall had been prophesied by the prophets, and thus, in the plan of God. The consummation of national Israel was so traumatic, the first century Jews found it quite hard to comprehend. It was for this reason that Peter, James, John and Andrew came to Jesus after He mentioned the event, and asked, *"Tell us when these things will be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"* (Mk 13:4).

In preparation for this traumatic change, Daniel prophesied over four hundred years before, ***"Plant the tabernacles of his palace"*** (11:45). The symbolism is of setting up, as Antiochus Epiphanes, symbols of religion in the temple at Jerusalem that was located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Great Sea (the Dead Sea). These would be attempts of antichrist Roman Caesars in an effort to impose pagan religious beliefs on God's people. This happened with Antiochus Epiphanes, as well as with the Roman Caesars during their oppression of the Jews and Christianity. After A.D. 70, the faith of Christians, that the Romans often associated with Judaism, was challenged when Caesars who deified themselves imposed Roman religion on all citizens of the Roman Empire. But this, too, would come to an end. The Roman Empire itself would eventually be consummated.

In reference to any self-exalting Caesar, Daniel prophesied, ***"He will come to his end"*** (11:45). The purpose of the prophecies of Daniel was to bring comfort to the persecuted people of God. In order to accomplish this purpose, God's people needed to know that there would always be an end to those who would persecute them or impose pagan religious beliefs and practices on them. It is for this reason that we affirm that Daniel 11 is fulfilled prophecy. We are comforted in the fact that God delivered on His promises to the faithful Jews that "pagan oppressors" would be brought to an end.

The ***time, times and half a time*** (7:25), the half week (9:27), and the ***time, times and half a time*** mentioned in this context (12:7), all reveal an end of those who would be antichrist in reference to God's work through His people. The final end of any antichrist will be the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Rv 19:20; see Zc 14:3,4). The final end of ungodly persecutors was revealed in order that the early Christians know the end of all persecutors. When the Messiah eventually came in time, the end of national Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the consummation of national Israel. The destruction revealed that God is now working toward the end of time, which time will be announced by the sound of a trumpet (See Mt 24). The meaning of the sound of this trumpet will signal that all time has terminated.

Chapter 12

12:1-4 These verses speak of a consummation of an age. Some have asserted that the vision reaches forward over 2,500 years and beyond in the future to the final coming of Christ. This interpretation may have some validity, but is not necessary for several reasons. (1) Any coming of God in judgment in time is typical of Jesus' final coming at the end of time. (2) The consummation of God's work through Israel happened in the first century, which consummation is typical of the consummation of this present age with the final coming of Jesus. (3) There is no reason why we should hijack a prophecy of comfort that was meant to encourage God's people who had to live through the conflict of nations that transpired from the time of Daniel to the coming of the Messiah. (4) We must keep in mind that through prophecy God wanted to generate anticipation in the minds of His people when they realized that the time of the fulfillment of prophecy was coming in their lifetime. Their understanding of the prophecies concerning the Messiah encouraged those in whose time the prophecies were fulfilled to accept Jesus as the Messiah. ***Michael will stand up:*** The archangel is here pictured as the one taking action on behalf of the people of God against evil kings and empires. It was formerly mentioned that he had a conflict with the king of Persia (10:13). At the end of time, it will be Jesus, not Michael, who will come with His angels in flaming fire to deal with evil kings and nations (See comments 2 Th 1:6-9). ***A time of trouble such as never occurred:*** Jesus' reference to this thought in Matthew 24:21,22 in reference to His prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 identifies that to which this statement refers. ***Your people:*** The vision indicates that Daniel's people, the Jews, were the ones to be delivered. Since reference would be to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, then "your people" would be those faithful descendants of Daniel's faith who would not suffer the calamity of the destruction of the Jewish state and Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24). ***Written on the scroll:*** The citizenship of nations was determined by those who were written on the registry of a nation. In reference to the Jewish genealogies, the genealogy of the true Jew was recorded, and thus he could trace his lineage back to his forefathers. The practice of being written in the book was also used symbolically in reference to the saints at the end of time (Ph 4:3; Rv 21:27). ***Those who sleep ... will awake:*** This language is certainly used in reference to the end of time (Compare Jn 5:28,29; 1 Th 4:13-18). However, the concept of a spiritual resurrection in time would also be in view because of the next statement. ***Wise will shine:*** In Jesus' discussion of the finality of the Jewish state and the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 13:43, He stated that when Jerusalem was destroyed, it would then be revealed those who were the accepted of God. It would be the righteous saints who would "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom." They will shine forth to the unrighteous. However, at the end of time, the unrighteous will be taken away (Mt 24:29-41), and thus there would be no one before whom the righteous could shine forth. ***Those who turn many to righteousness:*** The mission of the early Christians was to go forth and preach the gospel, thus turning men from sin to righteousness (See Mk 16:15,16). This ministry will cease after the final coming of Jesus. Through the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus manifested to the world that the church was the manifestation of His kingdom reign on earth. Through the preaching of the gospel, those who feared God could be transferred into the body of God's people by obedience to the gospel (See comments Rm 6:1-6; Cl 1:13). ***Until the time of the end:*** This was the end of the Jewish state that occurred in the first century with the destruction of Jerusalem. The content of the book was not revealed until Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 and announced that the eternal plan of God for the salvation of all men was now made known. The mystery of God that was kept secret since the fall of man in the garden of Eden was revealed through Jesus and announced for the first time in history on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 (See comments At 2; Ep 3:3-5).

12:5-13 ***The man clothed in linen:*** This would be the One who appeared at the beginning of this revelation, the preincarnate Son of God. One of the angelic beings called to the other concerning how long it would be until the end of these wonders. The Son lifted His right hand to heaven in order to confirm by the eternal Father who had determined that the time of tribulation for the saints would have an end. ***Power of the holy people:*** When the power of the gospel had gone forth from and by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, then God would have accomplished the mission of the revealed grace of salvation to man that would continue until the final coming of the Son (See Mt 28:18,20; Mk 16:15,16; At 8:4; see comments Cl 1:23). All that God had worked through the nation of Israel, beginning with the faith of Abraham (Gn 12:1-2; Rm 4:16), and continued through the building of the nation of Israel, came to pass. Thus national Israel was terminated in the first century and the good news of the grace that was revealed at the cross went forth into all the world (Mk 16:20). ***Sealed until the time of the end:*** When the fullness of the times had come, God sent forth His Son (See comments Gl 4:4). The mystery was then revealed (See comments Ep 3:3-5). The sealed book was opened for all men to see the contents of the mystery of God. ***Many will be purified and made white and tested:*** Through the preaching of the gospel, the sins of many were forgiven (See Rv 3:5; 7:14). ***The wicked will do wickedly:*** If reference in this context was to the end of time, then this statement would make no sense. At the end of time Jesus will cast the wicked into eternal punishment (Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:6-9). In the historical context of these statements, however, the wicked will continue, and continue to do wickedly after the revelation of the mystery of the gospel. The fulfillment of this prophecy could happen only during the time of the consummation of the age of Israel. Those who received and obeyed the Messiah, would be the wise. Those who reject Him, would continue in their wicked ways (See comments Jn 1:11). ***Abomination of desolation:*** The cessation of the daily sacrifices, and the abomination of desolation in this context links us to 8:11-13, would be a reference to the work of Antiochus Epiphanes who terminated the daily sacrifices in Jerusalem. What he did in actuality, however, symbolically portrayed what would happen at the end of the Jewish state

with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Rome would bring an end to the daily sacrifices with the destruction of the temple. The fact that Jesus referred to this very statement in His description of the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:15 links the two events. Jesus thus gives the interpretation. ***1,280:*** Many frustrated Bible students have tried to link this number to a particular period of time in history in reference to the fulfillment of this three years, six and a half months. The only possible fulfillment would be to the time of battle that Rome took to destroy Jerusalem in A.D. 70, with the completion of Rome's war with the Jews that took place at Masada. ***Go your way:*** Daniel was not to worry himself with what was revealed. The message was shut up until its fulfillment, which fulfillment was played out in history until it was revealed in the first century. And thus the prophecy was meant for those who would experience its fulfillment, which all those who were of the faith of Abraham did unto the first century. ***Rise again for your allotted inheritance at the end of the ages:*** The end of the ages for national Israel would be its termination with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). This would be the end of all things for the Jews. However, some have assumed that Daniel took the thinking of the Jews to the end of time. (See comments Jn 5:28,29; 1 Th 4:13-18). However, to the Jews we must keep in mind that the end of national Israel was the end of their age. All things in reference to the Messiah, Savior and the incarnation of the Son of God was wrapped up in Jesus. Once the gospel of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and gospel reign of the Son of God was completed, then there needed to be no more "ages" on this earth. This present age of the gospel will conclude with the resurrected and ascended Son of God is revealed from heaven. The coming of the Messiah, therefore, meant the consummation of national Israel. The Jews are now to be disseminated into church of Christ (Gl 3:26-29).

Hosea

WRITTER

The writer of this book is Hosea (1:1), the son of Beeri. We know nothing of Hosea's early years, other than the fact that he ministered God's word to the northern kingdom of Israel. The name Hosea means "salvation." It is from the same root Hebrew word for Joshua and Jesus.

Hosea was commanded by God to marry Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. After their marriage, however, she became unfaithful to her marriage contract, leaving her home and giving herself over to prostitution. Nevertheless, Hosea was devoted to her, and thus took her back as his wife according to the command of God.

Through Gomer, Hosea had three children (1:3-9). The first was Jezreel, meaning "vengeance." The second was Lo-Ruhamah, meaning "not pitied," or "have no more mercy." The third was Lo-Ammi, meaning "not my people." The name of each child represented God's relationship with His people in the northern kingdom of Israel throughout their time of apostasy.

Hosea's ministry was to the northern kingdom of Israel. Throughout the book, he often uses the largest tribe of the northern kingdom, Ephraim, to refer to the northern kingdom. Hosea was the first prophet to address the northern kingdom, prophesying God's judgment upon the kingdom for its apostasy to idol worship. The sorrow that befell Hosea in his family proclaimed the sorrow that God felt for His people of the northern kingdom who went after idol gods. As Hosea's wife turned from him, so Israel turned from their God who had given them birth by bringing them out of Egyptian captivity. As Gomer played the harlot, Israel played the harlot with idol gods.

DATE

The ministry of Hosea began during the reign of Jeroboam II (770-749 B.C.) of the northern kingdom and Uzziah (792-740 B.C.) of the southern kingdom. It continued into the reign of Hezekiah (728-697 B.C.). His ministry could have extended over a period of seventy years, with the writing of different portions of this book throughout these years. At the end of this period he added the final prophecies to the book at the end of his life.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first years of Hosea's ministry took place during a period of turmoil among the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel. Leading up to this period were the reigns of Jehu who killed Joram (2 Kg 9:21-28), as well as the heirs of Jezebel and Ahab (2 Kg 9:30 – 30:28). After Jehu came Jehoahaz (2 Kg 13:1-9) and Joash (2 Kg 13:10-13). Then came Jeroboam II, who reigned for forty-one years, during which Hosea prophesied (2 Kg 14:23-29).

After the death of Jeroboam II, the kingship of the northern kingdom fell into a state of anarchy. Zechariah came to the throne, but reigned only six months before he was assassinated by Shallum (2 Kg 15:8-12). Shallum reigned only one month before he was deposed by Menahem (2 Kg 15:13-16). Menahem reigned ten years before he died a natural death (2 Kg 15:17-22). During his reign, the northern kingdom was invaded by Tiglath-pileser the king of Assyria. After Menahem came Pekahiah who reigned for two years (2 Kg 15:17-23). He was assassinated by Pekah, the captain of his guard. Pekah sought help from the Egyptians in his defense against the Assyrians. He made an alliance with Rezin of Syria in order to overthrow Ahaz of the southern kingdom, Judah. He was eventually assassinated

by Hosea. Hosea paid tribute to Assyria in order to continue his reign and the existence of the northern kingdom. However, Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria, eventually arrested him. The successor to Shalmaneser V, Sargon, took Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom. After the destruction, 27,280 Israelites of the northern kingdom were taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C., thus ending the existence of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Betrayal And Restoration
(1:1 – 3:5)

Outline: (1) Marriage and family (1:1 – 2:1), (2) Unfaithfulness and restoration (2:2-23), (3) Restoration of a broken marriage (3:1-5)

Chapter 1
MARRIAGE & FAMILY

1:1-3 ***The word ... that came to Hosea:*** Throughout the book, God spoke through Hosea, as well as through the personal words of God that Hosea recorded by inspiration (See Jr 1:2; Jl 1:l; Mc 1:1; Zp 1:1). ***Take ... a wife:*** Hosea's marriage was by the command of God. Not only was he to marry, but he was to marry a prostitute. God's reason for this marriage was to illustrate to Hosea and Israel their spiritual adultery in going after idol gods.

1:4-5 ***Jezreel:*** The name of the child was given by God, for God wanted to proclaim to Israel, the northern kingdom, that judgment was coming. God would bring an end to the house of Jehu by bringing vengeance upon him and his heritage. ***Blood of Jezreel:*** Reference was to the city of Abha and Jezreel where the house of Ahab was massacred by Jehu (2 Kg 9:21-37). Though this prophecy was spoken sixty years before the fall of the northern kingdom, Jehu's cruel slaughter of the house of Ahab signalled the beginning of the fall of the northern kingdom. ***Break the bow:*** The power of Israel would be broken and she would go into captivity.

1:6,7 ***Lo-Ruhamah:*** Since the Hebrew name Lo-Ruhamah means "not pitied," or possibly, "unfavored," it is conceivable that this was an illegitimate child. In reference to God's pity on Israel, the time had come for the cessation of mercy. The northern kingdom was to come to an end because she no longer represented God among the nations. However, God would continue to have mercy on Judah. The northern kingdom eventually went into captivity in 722/21 B.C., but God did not allow the southern kingdom, Judah, to go into captivity until 586 B.C. God's deliverance of the northern kingdom from the nations had ceased, and thus He would not spare them of His judgment on them through the Assyrian army.

1:8,9 ***Lo-Ammi:*** This third child was illegitimate. As the child was not Hosea's, so Israel was no longer God's people. The protection that came from the covenant that God had with Israel was terminated since Israel had violated her conditions for maintaining the covenant (See Ex 19:5; Ps 118:6; Ez 16:8). She became an idolatrous nation, serving other gods.

1:10,11 ***Judah ... Israel ... will be gathered together:*** Though God would eventually send all His people into captivity, there would be a gathering of the two kingdoms again into one nation. They would be restored to Palestine as one nation. Those who conclude that the northern ten tribes went into captivity, never again to return, miss this prophecy. God had warned Israel that the apostasy would take them into captivity. However, He minded them in this context that He would remember His promise to Abraham, that his seed would be as the sand of the sea (Gn 22:17; 32:12). ***One head:*** In their apostasy they appointed their own kings, and finally kings were appointed for them by foreign powers. But in their return from captivity, they would again accept God as their only king, and eventually the Messiah who was to come in the future. King Jesus would eventually be their head and the center of reference to all their faith (See comments Ep 1:20-23; Cl 1:18). However, He would not reign on this earth. He would reign from heaven at the right hand of God.

Chapter 2

2:1 ***Ammi ... Ruhamah:*** The time would come during their captivity when all Israel would repent, and then be claimed by God. They would then be returned to the land of promise as a repentant remnant.

UNFAITHFULNESS AND RESTORATION

2:2-5 ***Contend with your mother:*** This is a plea to the adulterous woman to forsake her adultery. Israel was the adulterous woman in her idolatry. God thus gives a passionate plea for a remnant to come out of a nation that had given itself over to the worship of the Baal gods. The plea was to the children, not the wife. The nation as a whole had gone into idolatry, but there were individuals within the nation who remained faithful. The identity of Israel as a nation was lost in the apostasy, but God always deals with individuals. We must not think, therefore, that because the majority went into idol worship, that every individual of the nation followed the idolatrous majority. ***As in the day she was born:*** When Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, she was as a newly born naked baby (See comments Ez 16:4-14). Because Israel had followed after the whoredoms of idolatry, God was about to strip her naked again. ***Wilderness:*** Israel was spiritually destitute. ***Not have mercy on her children:*** This statement must be viewed in conjunction with the plea of verse 3. If there was no plea, then the children would be lost in idolatry. If the faithful few followed after the majority of the idolatrous nation, then there would be no spiritual remnant of Israel to return after the chastisement of captivity. ***Lovers:*** These were the many Baals whom they superstitiously thought would bring them wealth. Beginning during the time of the judges, the Israelites gave themselves over to the idols of other nations, which idols they assumed brought them their sustenance of life and riches. They became a rich nation during the reign of Solomon. Since Solomon gave himself over to the idols of his many wives, the people concluded that wealth could be acquired by conducting business deals with idolatrous nations.

2:6-8 ***Hedge up your way:*** God would cut off the idolatry from the nation. Israel went so far into idolatry that God

had to use extreme measures to bring her back to Him. ***She will eagerly pursue after her lovers:*** In order to maintain her wealth, Israel would follow after the idolatrous nations, but the nations would eventually forsake her. They would not save her from the destruction of Assyrian captivity. ***Return to my first husband:*** The calamity through which God would take the nation would eventually stimulate repentance. The faithful remnant would eventually realize that there was no salvation in the idolatrous nations after which the Israelite nation had formerly adopted idolatrous worship. Upon repentance, however, God would receive the faithful back into a covenant relationship. ***She did not know:*** The irony of Israel was in the fact that it was God who brought them out of captivity and built them as a nation. After God had done all this for the nation, the people attributed their growth to prosperity and security to the Baal gods of the nations around them. Solomon attributed his prosperity to his wise business dealings with the nations, and his acceptance of the gods of those nations. Israel followed after his example, and subsequently in the history that followed Solomon, the people gave themselves over to the idols of the nations from which they traded for wealth.

2:9-13 ***Take back My grain:*** In order to bring Israel to repentance, God had to take from them that in which they trusted, that is, their wealth. He had to impoverish them in order to generate faith in Him. Israel would be brought into abject poverty in order that she realize that life does not consist of the abundance of that which one possesses. She had run to idolatry in order to gain wealth, and thus the wealth became the idol of her existence. All that God had given to her in order to encourage gratitude would be taken away in captivity. ***Days of the Baals:*** This was the apostate era of Israel when she decked herself as an adulterous woman in order to lure lovers (See Jr 4:30; Ez 23:40). She gave herself over to the nations who would bring her wealth and admiration.

2:14-20 At the end of the preceding pronouncement of judgment, came a proclamation of God's redemptive actions toward His people. Though Israel had given herself over to idol gods, God would woo her back into His presence and covenant. ***Into the wilderness:*** The wilderness wanderings of Israel after they came out of Egyptian captivity was a time when Israel had a close relationship with God. It was a time when the people existed under the total care and preservation of God through the manna and quail. Into this relationship, therefore, God promised that He would once again bring His repentant people back into the land of promise. ***Vineyards:*** The vineyards that were given to the people by God, but taken away by their Assyrian captivity, would once again be restored to the people. ***Valley of Achor:*** When entering the promised land, Israel sinned at the Valley of Achor (Ja 7:20-26; Is 65:10). It was then a place where they experienced trouble because of their sin, and now it would be a place of hope. The trouble that the nation experienced at Achor revealed that God would be their God of hope in times of trouble. At that time, they experienced the punishment that resulted from breaking the law of God, but also the grace of God that preserved them throughout the conquest of the land. ***I will make a covenant with them:*** This statement seems to take Israel beyond the restoration of the remnant from their captivity to the time after the Babylonian captivity. Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire would allow the captives to freely return to their homelands. God would renew His covenant with the restored remnant. However, Jeremiah 31:31-34 seems to be in view of the new covenant that God would establish with His people as a result of their obedience to the gospel during the Messianic era (See comments). The restored covenant relationship with Israel after the captivities was made in view of the new covenant that would come with the Messiah. ***Break the bow:*** See comments Is 2:1-4; 35:9; Zc 9:10 (Lv 26:3-8; Ez 34:25-28). ***I will betroth you to Me:*** The repentant could bring nothing to the One who would give all things. Israel had nothing to offer God. Grace and mercy would go forth as a gift, not something that could be earned by obedience.

2:21-23 There would be a consummation in the restoration of spiritual Israel. Through their restoration God would manifest His mercy. ***Jezreel:*** The faithful give thanks to God for their sustenance of grain, wine and oil. The grain, wine and oil ask the earth that responds with soil for growth. The earth asks of the heavens for the rain that responds with rain to produce growth. It is God who gives the rains from heaven in order to sustain Jezreel. The spiritual would be sown in the earth and nourished by the mercy of God. Those who were formerly disowned by God, would once again be His people. They would be His people because of their repentance. Their faithfulness, therefore, would result in their rebirth and continuation as a nation. Only through their faithfulness to God would they exist as a nation.

Chapter 3
RESTORATION OF A BROKEN MARRIAGE

3:1-5 Gomer had left Hosea and given herself over to adultery and prostitution. However, God commanded Hosea to bring her back as his wife. In the same manner God would bring apostate Israel back into a covenant relationship with Him. The people had given themselves over to the festivals of the Baal gods. Nevertheless, God loved His people, even though His people did not return His love. What is being manifested in this call for restoration is God's true character. He is the God of love, and thus true love has no limits. ***Bought her:*** We are not told from whom Hosea had to buy Gomer. She had possibly sold herself to a brothel or to a keeper of prostitutes. The price he had to give for her was the price of a slave. We would not say that it was easy for Hosea to do what God had commanded. We would only assume that he still loved her, regardless of the immoral state in which he found her. ***Dwell with me many days:*** Gomer was unclean at the time Hosea took her home. She had to go through a period of purification, and thus was only to dwell in the home of Hosea. We can only imagine the atmosphere of Hosea's home during this time of purification. ***Without a king:*** When God sent both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel into captivity, it was the end of their kings on earth. They lost their nationhood as a result of their apostasy, and thus after their restoration to Palestine they would no longer have a king on earth. As at the time when they came out of Egyptian

captivity, God reigned over them in the post-captivity until the coming of David their king, who was King Jesus. The Messianic promise refers to King Jesus who would ascend to the right hand of God and be their king (See comments Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). ***Latter days:*** This would be the last days of Israel that would take place when the Messiah came and His kingdom reign was established (See comments At 2:16,17). It was in the last days of Israel when the spiritual Israel began with the baptism of about 3,000 people on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. Those who obeyed the gospel in the last days were those who expressed their "fear" of the Lord by their response to the gospel. True faith would be expressed by a response to the gospel.

Decay And Decline
(4:1 – 13:16)

Outline: (1) Cause of decay and decline (4:1-19), (2) Condemnation of national leadership (5:1-15), (3) God's plea for national repentance (6:1 – 7:16), (4) Announcement of judgment (8:1 – 9:17), (5) Repent or perish (10:1-15), (6) God's faithful love (11:1-12), (7) The fruitful becomes unfruitful (12:1 – 13:16)

Chapter 4
CAUSE OF DECAY & DECLINE

4:1-6 ***No truth or mercy or knowledge:*** There was no truth in the land in the sense that there was no faithfulness to the will of God. There was no mercy, and thus the society of Israel had digressed into an unloving society in which there was no compassion for one another. Each one was concerned only for himself. There was no knowledge, or communion with God (See Jr 22:16). The people were ignorant of the law of God, and thus created social morals after their own desires. They were a society in moral chaos, and thus headed for self-destruction. All that God stated through Hosea in this text identifies a society that is in moral decay. And when a society is morally distant from God, the people do not know God. ***Blood touches blood:*** Murder and murder for revenge was the ultimate identity of a socially imploding society. ***Charges against a priest:*** The people had no respect for religious leadership. In their self-willed arrogant deprivation, they were set on doing that which was right in their own eyes, regardless of any moral direction from the religious leadership. Because of this intimidation, the religious leadership that existed would not take a stand against the evil of the society. The religious leaders had seemingly given up on correcting the moral digression. ***Destroy your mother:*** The mother of the individual citizen was the nation itself. Therefore, God would destroy the nation (the mother) in order to preserve a faithful remnant. In this context, the priests and the prophets were condemned because they followed the people into religious apostasy. Through their erroneous teachings and false prophecies, they led the people into idolatry. ***Destroyed for lack of knowledge:*** The nation would be destroyed because they gave up a knowledge of the one true and living God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). It was not that they became a nation without religion. They followed after idolatrous worship. However, they forgot the law of God. In the absence of a knowledge of the law of God, they created religious beliefs and behavior after their own desires. Once one creates a religion after his own desires, he then creates a god who approves of his religious behavior. Such a person no longer knows the God of heaven. Once the law of God is forgotten by the parents, the parents have no spiritual heritage to pass on to their children. The children, therefore, suffer from the parent's ignorance of the word of God (Compare comments 2 Th 2:9-12; Rv 22:18,19). Any society that gives up a knowledge of the word of God, sets itself on a course of moral destruction. Those who do not know their Bibles cannot know the God of the Bible.

4:7-11 ***Glory into shame:*** The sinful ways in which they took pride would be the occasion for which they would be shamed. When they repented during their captivity, they would look back on their behavior at this time in history and realize how foolish they were. ***Like people, like priest:*** The indictment against the religious leaders was that the priests conformed to the wishes of the people. Instead of maintaining their responsibilities of teaching the people the word of God, they forgot the law, and then rejected the law in order to maintain their positions as priests before the people (See Mk 7:1-9). They were supported full-time by the people, and thus in order to maintain their support, they conformed to the desires of those who rejected the word of God.

4:12-14 ***Counsel from their idols:*** They had led themselves to believe that they received answers from their idols. Idolatry is the imagination of things that originate from within the mind of men. The idolaters were thus consulting their own imaginations in order to fulfill their own lusts. ***Tops of mountains:*** Places of worship were established to which they would go to carry out their idolatrous ceremonies. Their daughters committed fornication at their places of worship and married people committed adultery. ***I will not punish:*** It was not that they would go without punishment from God. They would receive indirect punishment from God by reaping the results of their own sin. They would reap what they had sown (Gl 6:7,8). The immoral living of the parents would result in the children following after harlotry. The children thus increased the sin of their parents to the point that the nation had digressed into a nation that no longer represented God. ***The people who do not understand will fall:*** The nation had gone past the point of moral regeneration. Only destruction of the nation and captivity would lead to the saving of a small remnant.

4:15-19 This context is a warning to Judah, the southern kingdom. The two principal altars in the southern part of the northern kingdom were in Gilgal and Beth-aven (Bethel). They were in close proximity to the residents of Judah. Hosea thus warned those of Judah not to go up to these altars of idolatry. ***Beth-aven:*** Hosea changed the name of Bethel, meaning "house of God," to Beth-aven, meaning "house of iniquity." Judah could not go to the shrines of idols and at the same time claim to be swearing allegiance to God. ***Backsliding heifer:*** Israel was as a stubborn cow that would not be led. ***Can the Lord now feed them:*** Since Israel had joined herself to idolatrous worship, she could no longer be fed by the Lord. She had rejected the law of God and followed after

her own imaginations (vs 6). Her society was established after the morals of her own choosing, and thus there was no way for repentance. If one does not feel the guilt of sin, there is no desire for repentance. Israel's conscience had been dulled by her form of religiosity that conformed to the desires of the people. They had given up a conscience that was based on the word of God. Because they had given themselves over to follow after their own religious inventions, God was bringing the Assyrians to take them away into captivity. The northern kingdom would eventually fall to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. The generation that would be taken into captivity would die in captivity. Only their repentant descendants would return in 536 B.C. with the Medo-Persian release of captives during the reign of King Cyrus.

Chapter 5

CONDEMNATION OF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

5:1-7 This chapter is a condemnation of the unrighteous leadership of the priests and kings, and the willing followers of the people. ***Priests:*** Though the religious leaders encouraged the people to follow after erroneous religions, the people were still held accountable for following them. Every individual will be held accountable for his own sin (2 Co 5:10). Religious leaders who conform to the will of the people are not leaders for God. ***Mizpah ... Tabor:*** Both mountains were known places of worship to the Baal gods. From these to primary locations, the priests and kings led the people in idolatrous worship and away from God. ***Rebels:*** They were bound to a culture of corruption and immorality. Because they had at this time in their history become a culture of wickedness, there was no turning back to the righteousness of God. Subsequently, God had no choice but to carry out His promise that He would take them from the land and into captivity. ***I know Ephraim:*** God knew the hearts of the people. ***Their deeds:*** Their behavior manifested their apostasy. Apostasy is never a simple change in one's beliefs, but in behavior that is directed by values. In Israel's case, their idolatry had changed their world view. And since world view determines one's values, and values determine behavior, they could not turn back because their world view had been altered and patterned after pagan religions. ***Haughtiness:*** In her prosperity, Israel became arrogant. She suffered from a sickness of the heart in that she took pride in her national whoredom with other nations. They viewed their relationship with other nations as security for their continued existence as a nation among the nations. ***Judah also will fall:*** Though Judah was warned not to follow the wickedness of her northern sister, Hosea prophesied here that she too would fall and go into captivity. Judah went into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. All Israel would fall as a result of their own idolatrous behavior and failure to rely on God. ***Go with their flocks:*** They would go with their sacrifices to the altar in order to perform the required rites of the law. However, their hearts were far from the Lord. Since they had created a god after their own imagination, the god to whom they offered their sacrifices was not the God of heaven. ***He has withdrawn:*** In the day of their judgment, they would seek the Lord. However, the Lord withdrew from them and turned them over to the destruction of the Assyrians and Babylonians. As a small nation, they could not have stood alone against the powerful empires of their neighbors. Israel was not a warrior nation. The Assyrians and Babylonians were. Without the help of God, therefore, the fate of Israel was sealed. They would succumb to the conquest of warrior nations as the Assyrians and Babylonians. ***Foreign children:*** The parents had passed to the children their faith in idols, and thus the children knew nothing of the law of God. They did not know God (4:6). ***New moon:*** This was a feast when sacrifices were offered (See 1 Sm 20:6,29; Is 1:13,14). It was not that the destruction would be within the coming month, though reference could have been to the imminent invasion of Tiglath-pileser which took place at this time in their history (2 Kg 15:29).

5:8-15 ***Blow the cornet ... trumpet:*** These were blown to alert the people to invasion. Gibeah and Ramah were in the territory of the northern kingdom, and thus the invasion was first coming upon them. ***"Behind you, Benjamin":*** It seems that the northern kingdom had already been invaded, and Judah was at this time threatened. ***Ephraim will be desolate:*** God had forewarned Israel that if they forsook His law, He would forsake them. ***Remove the boundary:*** As her northern sister, Judah also was a culture of thieves. They moved the land boundary markers in order to claim the land of others. Governments that allow its citizens to steal land from one another have morally fallen, since land is the means by which the citizens survive. ***Commandment of men:*** Contrary to following after the commandments of God that they rejected, they followed after the commandments of men (See comments Mk 7:1-9). ***Moth ... rottenness:*** As a moth slowly eats away at the cloth, so the destruction would be slow (Is 51:8). The fall of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel was gradual. They did not realize that they were going into total destruction until it was too late. ***When Ephraim saw his sickness:*** Cultural apostasy is gradual. It is so gradual that the people do not realize that they are falling away from God. With both Israel and Judah the cultural degradation was the same. They gradually went into apostasy. In order to bring them back to the law of God, it took the social chaos of captivity. There is no social chaos when a society goes into apostasy. Repentance of the society, however, is always with pain. Paradigm shifts to God come with great social chaos, for the shift to righteousness is against the standards of apostate behavior and beliefs that are accepted by the majority of the society. ***Ephraim went to the Assyrian:*** Israel had moved so far away from God, that in her fear of Egypt, she sought to make an alliance with the nation, Assyria, that would eventually take her into captivity. ***King Jareb:*** The word "Jareb" means "warrior" or "great king." This was not a specific king of Assyria, but a title that was commonly used to refer to all kings of Assyria as great kings. ***As a lion:*** God would use the nation of Assyria to discipline both Israel and Judah. When God unleashed the Assyrians on Israel, there was no help from Him to save her. Since the proxy judgment of Israel through the Assyrians was the work of God, no other nation was allowed by God to rise up and save Ephraim. ***Until they ac-***

knowledge their offense: Israel would go into captivity and stay there until they repented. Their restoration to the land, therefore, depended on their spiritual restoration to God. The calamity of their fall was for the benefit of their salvation.

Chapter 6

GOD'S PLEA FOR NATIONAL REPENTANCE

6:1-3 Herein is an appeal of Hosea on behalf of the people. Since it was God who had torn them with national calamity, then it could only be God who could heal them. ***Two days:*** In comparison to the period of time it took them to go into apostasy, Hosea indicates that their binding up will be brief. ***Third day:*** This is not a direct reference to the resurrection of Jesus. It is difficult to determine the specific use of the third day other than the fact that it was a time of restoration. However, it could possibility have been used later to refer symbolically to the resurrection of the Messiah (See Lk 13:32,33). ***Then we will know:*** This is more than knowledge of God. Reference is to behavior that is directed by knowing the will of God. If one does not obey the will of God, he cannot know God. ***Morning:*** When there is repentance, there is the dawning of a new life (Is 58:8; 60:1,2). ***Rain:*** When there is rain, there is the beginning of a new existence (See Lv 26:4,5; Dt 11:14; 28:12). God will come with blessing when we turn to Him in obedience. The promise of this text points to the time of the Messiah, whose coming would bring the spiritual blessings of God (See Is 35:5,6; 44:3; Ez 36:25-28).

6:4-11 With verse 4, the narrative again turns to God's lament over the unfaithfulness of His people. ***Goodness ... as the early dew:*** The righteous behavior of the nation was short-lived. ***Hewn them by the prophets:*** God sent prophets with a message of rebuke and condemnation. The light of God's judgments manifested the darkness into which they had morally digressed. ***I desire mercy and not sacrifice:*** They performed the ceremonies of the law without a heart of compassion. They became the example of a religiosity that was not accompanied with moral behavior. Their outward performance of law was not a manifestation of an inward godliness (See comments Mk 7:1-9). ***Knowledge of God:*** Herein is defined the knowledge of God. It is more than performance of law. When one truly knows God, he knows more than the commandments of God. He behaves his knowledge of God. Heartless obedience of law is worthless in the sight of God (See 1 Sm 15:22; Ps 40:6-9; 50:8-15; Is 1:11-17; Mc 6:8). ***Transgressed the covenant:*** They had failed to keep the conditions of the covenant. ***Treacherously:*** They obeyed the ceremonies of the law, but behaved as wicked people. They assumed that their obedience to religious ceremonies would atone for wicked behavior. ***Gilead:*** This city was known as a city of murderers (See 2 Kg 15:25). ***Murder ... by consent:*** The religious leadership did not stand up against the evil of the day. Instead of taking a stand against wickedness, their silence condoned a society that had morally gone wrong. In being silent as religious leaders, therefore, they partook of that which was committed. ***A harvest appointed:*** As God had harvested the wickedness of Israel by sending her into captivity, Judah also would suffer the same harvest.

Chapter 7

7:1-3 Verse 1 seems to be the concluding thought of 6:11. After Israel endured her captivity, then she would realize the wickedness of her idolatry. As Hosea was to rescue his wife Gomer from harlotry, God would rescue His people through captivity. The captivity would bring repentance, and thus as a nation she would be cleansed through captivity. Only when she was cleansed would she look back on her idolatry and understand how wickedly she had behaved before God. We would assume that Hosea's love for Gomer produced the same result in her life. ***Healed Israel:*** These prophecies of their captivity can never be understood properly if interpreters fail to recognize that the northern ten tribes of Israel were to be brought back from Assyrian captivity. Though they would stay longer in captivity than Judah, when the return came by the command of King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire, a remnant of all twelve tribes returned to their homeland of Palestine (See comments Et & Ne). ***Before My face:*** God knew all the wickedness of the people. Their sin was as a stench that turned Him from them.

7:4-7 This picture of the moral state of the nation is deplorable. We must understand this description as God would view the people from heaven. The king was guilty in that the wickedness of the nation amused him and his royal court. The people had no regard for covenant relationships with one another. Their sin was so prevalent that it was as the heated oven of a baker that is continually hot except for the time when he is kneading the dough. They made the king drunken with wine while he stretched out his hand in union with those who would plot against him. In his drunkenness, a way was planned for his murder. Plotters professed loyalty to the king while they schemed to assassinate him (See 2 Kg 15). In their moral degradation, there was no one who sought to call on the Lord for deliverance from their deplorable state of affairs. Their consciences had been so seared with sin that the option of turning to God was void in their religious culture.

7:8-10 ***Mixed:*** The people had forsaken their culture that was based on God's word and separation from the sinful cultures of the nations. At this time in their history their behavior could not be identified as different from the wicked cultures of unbelievers. ***Cake not turned:*** They are burned on one side, and yet not cooked on the other. They were a worthless burnt cake that was to be thrown in the rubbish. ***Foreigners:*** Since they had become as the foreign idolatrous nations, they had no help from God, for He had turned them over to destruction. ***Gray hairs:*** They were at the end of their existence, but were unaware of their old age. ***Pride of Israel:*** Their desire to compete financially with the surrounding nations, specifically since the days of Solomon, was leading to their downfall. They focused on their wealth as a symbol of their greatness. Wealth and wickedness were more important than humble obedience to the word of God, which word they had long forgotten (4:6). ***They do not return:*** They had long forgotten the way back to God. The prophets of God preached repentance, but they rejected the way of life presented by the prophets. It was a way of life that depended on God, not themselves.

7:11-16 ***Silly dove:*** They fluttered about, vacillating be-

tween alliance with either Egypt or Assyria. In her international confusion she did not realize that she would be caught in the trap of Assyrian domination. God would bring Israel to a close by the proxy judgment of the Assyrians (Lv 26:14-44; Dt 28:15-68). ***Fled from Me:*** Because they had forsaken trust in God, they flew into the trap of foreign conquest by the Assyrians. ***I redeemed them:*** God had redeemed them out of Egyptian captivity. However, they forgot their past protection by God and flew to alliances with foreign nations for protection. They would not now be redeemed out of the hands of those who would conquer them. In the face of destruction, they cried out to their idol gods. The true and living God was only one god in their pantheon of gods, and thus they were insincere in their pleas to God for deliverance. ***Grain and wine:*** Instead of pleading to God for their sustenance, they went to their idol gods. ***Imagine mischief:*** Regardless of their past where God strengthened the nation against the invasion of foreign nations, they focused on alliances with idolatrous nations. When in times of calamity, they turned to their idol gods and not to God who had helped them throughout their history. ***Deceitful bow:*** As a warrior cannot depend on an untrustworthy bow in battle, so the nation was undependable. ***Cursings:*** The leaders reaped the reward of every idle word that came from their mouths. ***Derision:*** They would be mocked by the Egyptians when they fell to the Assyrians.

Chapter 8

ANNOUNCEMENT OF JUDGMENT

8:1-6 Israel was a backslidden nation. ***Trumpet:*** It was a time to warn the people of impending invasion. The Assyrians were on their way. God's judgment of the people through the proxy of the Assyrians was based on the fact that Israel had broken the conditions of their covenant with God. They had forsaken the law of God. ***"We know You":*** Their desperate cry to the Lord was unanswered. They claimed to know God, but they did not because of their disobedience of His law. They were no longer His people because they no longer made Him their God. ***Set up kings:*** The nation had digressed from God-anointed kings, to anointing kings of their own choice. In the end of the nation, foreign nations appointed kings for them. They thus could not claim to be the Israel of God simply because they had rejected God's direction of them as a nation through kings that He approved and anointed. ***Calf of Samaria:*** They set up a calf idol in Samaria their capital. It was a loathsome act in the face of God. They spurned the true God of heaven in order to worship an idol on earth. Their calf idol was proof that they had completely turned from God, and thus God turned from them. Idolatry is the spirit of man to determine his own behavior and future. The images he makes are a reflection of his beliefs. When men seek to do that which is right in their own eyes, they have followed after the spirit of idolatry.

8:7-10 Their idolatry and rejection of God had come to a climax, and thus they had to reap what they had sown (See comments Gl 6:7). They had sown disloyalty to God. They were to reap national destruction and captivity. God turned them over to the nations, and thus they were as a people on their own, unable to stand against the power of warrior nations as Assyria. ***Swallowed up:*** Israel would become a worthless vessel that would not hold water. ***Gone up to Assyria:*** This is not the exile that would eventually take place in 722/21 B.C. Reference was to Israel's tribute to Assyria in order to buy their preservation from an invasion by the Assyrians. ***Hired lovers:*** She went into alliances with the nations in order to stand against those who would seek to conquer her. In the latter days of Israel, she relied on political schemes in order to protect herself against those who would defeat her. The leaders relied on their own political skills rather than trusting in the protection of God. ***Waste away:*** Though Israel made many alliances and paid tribute to other nations, God would bring them into judgment as they began to waste away as a nation.

8:11-14 Israel had followed after their own religious inventions. Judah took pride in temples and fortified cities. Though the northern kingdom had digressed more quickly into apostasy, Judah would soon follow, and subsequently suffer the same fate has her northern sister. ***Many altars:*** When Jeroboam separated the northern ten tribes from Judah after the death of Solomon, he built altars in the north in order that the people not go to Jerusalem in Judea to offer sacrifices. The few idols with which he started the nation were increased throughout their history. They were at the time of Hosea a nation of numerous idols. ***A foreign thing:*** The law of God was so minimized that its precepts and judgments become a foreign thing in the minds of the people. They could not differentiate between the law of God and the idolatrous religion that they had created after their own imagination. ***Eat it:*** The people enjoyed the sacrificing since they enjoyed the eating of the sacrifice. They had turned from offering of sacrifices as devotion to God and enjoyment of fellowship with the priests to simply cooking meat for their own gratification. ***The Lord does not accept them:*** They offered and ate their sacrifices, but without a true knowledge of God (See Mc 6:6-9). Their sacrifices were void of a sincere heart that was devoted to God alone. ***Will return to Egypt:*** Egypt represented bondage, and thus they would go into the bondage of Assyria. ***Forgotten his Maker:*** Israel forgot that it was God who brought them out of Egyptian captivity. They built temples to foreign gods instead of worshiping the God of heaven. They had forgotten that the one true and living God does not dwell in temples made with hands (See comments At 17:24-27). ***I will send fire:*** This prophecy applied to both Israel and Judah. God would send the Assyrians to burn the cities and temples of the northern kingdom in 722/21 B.C. He would send the Babylonians to burn Jerusalem and its temple in 586 B.C. All Israel, therefore, would end up in captivity because they turned from God their Maker to foreign gods they had created after their own imagination.

Chapter 9

9:1-6 This chapter describes the result of their sin that was explained in chapter 8. The nation was now ready for captivity. ***Do not rejoice:*** They must not rejoice over their prosperity, for all would be taken from them. Their whoring after oth-

er gods was the cause for their captivity. ***Loved harlots' hire:*** During the time of harvest they should have remembered that the fruits of the harvest were the blessing of God. However, they turned their harvest times into a time of debauchery and worship of the Baal gods. The time would come, however, when they would not enjoy the harvest of their homeland, but the burden of captivity. ***Return to Egypt:*** They would return to the bondage that they experienced in Egypt. They would not go into the bondage of Egypt, but into the bondage of Assyria (8:13). ***Eat unclean things:*** They would not be able to keep the statues of the law that determined what they could or could not eat. In bondage, they would eat anything for survival. ***Bread for their soul:*** They would be taken from those places to which they took their sacrifices for an offering. ***Feast:*** In exile they will not be able to observe the appointed feasts of the Lord that were given in the law. ***Egypt will gather:*** They will be gathered into bondage. Their riches will be plundered. The wealth in which they trusted would be taken away.

9:7-9 ***Days of visitation:*** These were the days of God's judgment that had come. ***The prophet is a fool:*** This was the professional false prophet who lured the people away from God by his false proclamations of peace (Ez 13:10). In the time of their national calamity they would discover that his proclamations of peace were a lie. ***Spiritual man:*** Those priests who assumed spiritual leadership would also be identified as mad in view of the clear evidence of their apostasy. Both the prophets and priests proclaimed peace in order to maintain their positions. They thus had a lying spirit (1 Kg 22:22). ***Watchman:*** Israel was to be the beacon of truth to all the nations. In their desire to run after wealth and prosperity, they made trading alliances with other nations, and thus gave themselves over to the false gods of those nations. They compromised their faith in order to gain wealth. They thus lost their witness for God by adopting the idol religions of the nations around them. They failed in their responsibility to proclaim the one true and living God to all the nations of the world. ***Gibeah:*** Gibeah became symbolic of moral degradation when every man did that which was right in his own eyes (See Jg 19; 21:25).

9:10-13 ***Grapes ... fig tree:*** God found Israel as a traveler would find grapes and a fig tree in the wilderness. She was an opportunity to quench thirst and satisfy hunger. But after delivering her from Egyptian captivity, she went after idol gods. The people then became in character and behavior that which they loved. Since idolatry is the creation of religious behavior after what one desires to believe and do, their character and behavior was molded according to what was right in their own eyes. ***Ephraim:*** The word means "fruitfulness." The pride of an Israelite woman was to bear children. However, the time had come when Israel would no longer be fruitful. Conception, birth and motherhood would flee from them. ***Glory:*** The glory of Israel was once her relationship with God. But that glory was gone because she forsook God for idol gods. ***I departed from them:*** Israel was not a military nation as the Assyrians and Babylonians. When God departed as her protector, then she was subject to the conquest of the nations. ***Planted in a pleasant place:*** Israel was given the land of Palestine, the major trade route of the ancient world. Traders of the northern and southern countries had to pass through Palestine when trading with one another. ***Tyre:*** Since Tyre was originally given to Israel, it was the major port city for nations trading from the east with those nations of the Mediterranean Sea. Israel had a tremendous opportunity to affect the world for God, but she forsook her responsibility as a witness for truth. The world be a different place today if Israel had not gone into apostasy from the God of heaven.

9:14-17 ***Give them a miscarrying womb:*** This verse of Hosea's question suggests that it would be better for Israel not to have children in captivity (Compare comments 1 Co 7:26; compare Jb 3:3; Jr 20:14; Lk 23:29). ***Gilgal:*** After Israel crossed into the land of promise, Gilgal was the first place they offered sacrifices in worship of God (Ja 4:20; Mc 6:5). However, by the time of Hosea's ministry to Israel it been dedicated to idol worship (4:15; 12:11). What at first was acceptable worship had become detestable to God. ***I hated them:*** God detested them as a nation because of their evil deeds and idolatrous beliefs. ***Root is dried up:*** The generation to which Hosea prophesied could no longer produce a nation that was pleasing to God. When they gave up on God, they could no longer produce a nation of people that would represent God among the nations. They could only produce fruit that worshiped idol gods. ***Cast them away:*** The northern kingdom would be disbursed among the nations because they had forgotten the law of God (4:6).

Chapter 10
REPENT OR PERISH

10:1,2 Hosea had already spoken of the sin of Israel. Now it was time to speak of their punishment. Throughout the book, he spoke of both sin and punishment. In verse 1 he here repeats the wayward leadership of their kings. In verse 3 he repeats the sin of their idol worship. Throughout his message against these two evils, in this context he uses many metaphors to exemplify their apostasy. ***Spreading vine:*** Instead of bringing forth fruit to honor God, they increased their altars in honoring their idol gods. They could have been a refreshing vine of truth for the nations. Instead, their religious beliefs and behavior were saturated with the false religions of the nations. ***Sacred pillars:*** See Ex 23:24; 1 Kg 14:23. ***Heart is divided:*** They were divided in loyalty between God and their idol gods.

10:3-8 ***We have no king:*** In exile they would have no king on earth, but they would always have God as their king in heaven. But because they did not fear God, and thus keep His commandments, their kings on earth were taken away. ***What would a king do:*** If they had feared God and kept His commandments, then they would have needed no king on earth. ***Swearing falsely:*** The kings on earth would keep their covenants only if it benefitted them. The kings' loyalty was not to the people, but to themselves. Selfish leaders, therefore, do not swear by covenants in order to benefit the people, but to promote their own thirst for power. ***Calves of Beth-aven:*** The calf idols of Beth-aven would be destroyed. The idola-

trous priests would mourn over their destruction because of their loyalty to the idols. ***Carried to Assyria:*** The golden calf idol will also be carried into captivity as spoil. ***King Jareb:*** The meaning is the "great king," a reference to the kings of Assyria. ***Shame:*** The idol from which Israel took council in reference to her future would be taken into captivity. Thus the false prophets who based their prophecy of peace on the golden calf idol would be shamed because they would be found false. The people would be shamed because they believed the false prophets. ***High places of Aven:*** Israel went to the high places to practice their idolatrous worship. They followed after the gods that they had created after their own imagination, and thus were no longer a representative for the purpose of God. God destroyed their idols through the conquest of the Assyrians, and latter the southern kingdom by the Babylonians. The high places where they worshiped idols and practiced debauchery would again be overgrown with weeds and thorns. ***Cover us:*** With everything in which they had trusted gone, they would seek death instead of captivity.

10:9-11 ***Gibeah:*** This was a place of sinfulness on the part of Israel (9:9). Though they were victorious over their enemies, they were not victorious over sin, for since the days of Gibeah they had sinned. ***Double iniquity:*** Because of the nation's great sins, they as a nation would be chastised. They would be chastised by the Lord in order that a remnant be refined and restored. ***Tread out the grain:*** This was an easy work as the cow was allowed to eat of the grain as she tread out the grain. ***Plow:*** But Israel would be taken from the easy threshingfloor to plow in the field of captivity. She would be given the yoke of Assyrian masters.

10:12-15 ***Mercy:*** Though condemned to the judgment of captivity, there was still hope for Israel. Repentance always brings God's mercy. Their repentance demanded turning to God. God always stands just in that He offers man a way of escape from his sinful condition. He is not willing that any perish (2 Pt 3:9). Because of the moral degradation into which the nation had sunk there was little hope of repentance. However, we must keep in mind that God's judgment on the nation was national judgment. We must remember that there were faithful individuals among the people who were listening to prophets as Hosea. When the northern kingdom eventually went into Assyrian captivity, many of these faithful individuals fled to Judah. ***Trusted in ... your mighty men:*** Without God, their most mighty men could not stand against the warrior soldiers of the Assyrian Empire. ***Shalman:*** This was possibly a reference to Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria who led the Assyrians against Israel (2 Kg 17:6). ***At dawn:*** At the beginning of the day, the king of Israel would be cut off. The kings of Israel would cease to exist, for Israel would never again have a king on earth. With both the northern and southern kingdoms, God terminated the earthly kings when they were taken into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity.

Chapter 11
GOD'S FAITHFUL LOVE

11:1-4 This chapter in the book reveals God's love for Israel as His son (See Dt 32:6,18; Is 63:16; 64:8; Jr 3:19; Ml 1:6; 2:10). God first called Israel as His son out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 4:22,23). However, God's love for Israel was not returned by those He delivered from bondage. Instead, Israel turned to other gods that they had created after their own imagination. They did not shun the influence that the idolatrous nations had upon them. Though God had been the father of their birth, they rebelled against Him and followed after the influence of the nations. ***Called my son:*** See Mt 2:15. ***They did not know:*** The more God worked to teach them how to walk as an independent nation, the less they responded with faith in Him. ***I led them:*** God led them with ropes of love. He lightened their burden in order that they might eat of His blessings. He stooped to feed them in order that they might live and grow.

11:5-7 Regardless of God's love and care for Israel, they were as a rebellious child. They thus needed discipline. ***Not return to ... Egypt:*** In 8:13 and 9:3, returning to Egypt was used symbolically for returning to bondage. Here it is to be taken literally. They would not go again into Egyptian captivity, but into Assyrian captivity. ***Because of their own counsels:*** They had refused to listen to the counsel of God, and thus depending on their own desires they digressed away from God into idol worship. They would as a nation reap the consequences of their own apostasy. ***Bent on backsliding:*** The nation had developed a culture of rebellion. In such a social state they could not on their own return to God. Only captivity would heal them of their rebellious spirit. In their time of national calamity when the Assyrians came, God would not listen to their pleas for help, for they had to go into captivity in order for a repentant remnant to be formed and returned to the land years later.

11:8-12 ***Admah ... Zeboim:*** With Sodom and Gomorrah, these were two of the four cities of the plain that were destroyed by God during the time of Abraham (Gn 14:8; 19:24,25). ***How will I give you up:*** God yearned for His people. As a parent yearns for a rebellious child, so God longed for the repentance of his son. God's abiding love for His rebellious child would never allow Him to give up on Israel. His love eventually paid off in that a repentant remnant returned to Him almost two hundred years later when King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire allowed all former captive Israelites to return to the land of Palestine in 536 B.C. Though all captives did not return to the land, a repentant remnant did in order to reestablish the identity of Israel. ***Judah still walks with God:*** Because of faithful leadership in the southern kingdom, God would allow Judah to continue. The northern kingdom went into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. At the time of writing, however, Judah was also on a path to destruction, for she too was in the process of giving herself over to idol worship. Judah eventually went into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.

Chapter 12
THE FRUITFUL BECOMES UNFRUITFUL

12:1-6 In this context, Hosea further reveals the culture of sin that plagued the northern kingdom. The people chased after the hot east wind, which if caught would sear them. They were burned with their own sin. ***Covenant with the Assyr-***

ians: They paid tribute to the Assyrians in order to keep the Assyrians appeased. They made payments of goods to Egypt in order to secure an alliance with them against the Assyrians. Instead of relying on God for protection, they resorted to the political schemes with the nations around them. All such efforts were eventually futile. ***Judah:*** The southern kingdom was following in the way of her northern sister. Though it was not time for her captivity, she was warned by the punishment that befell Ephraim in her captivity. ***Jacob:*** Reference here is to all twelve tribes. All tribes would eventually be punished because of apostasy. The tribes were the children of their father, Jacob, who practiced deceit. Though judged for his sin, Jacob repented through supplication. He strove with God, and then made supplication to God (Gn 32:24-32). In the same manner Israel was striving against God, but could still repent. ***Memorial name:*** Jehovah God is everlasting and does not change. Because Jacob strove with God, his name was changed to Israel, the name by which all twelve tribes became known. God's memorial name is everlasting and eternal. It never changes, and thus Israel is asked to return to this immutable God who will deliver them for their future existence.

12:7-10 ***A merchant:*** Israel was a deceitful merchant who was seeking gain as a fraudulent trader. Her lust for wealth led her to be dishonest with those with whom she traded. Her ill-gotten gain, therefore, was a manifestation of her moral sickness. ***Again make you dwell in tents:*** Israel's exile would be both punishment and a restoration to God. Her riches would be taken from her in captivity. In her poverty, however, she would be restored to faith in God. She would be restored to faith as she was during her wilderness wanderings when she initially came out of Egyptian captivity. Her punishment, therefore, would be for her salvation.

12:11-14 It was time for Israel to remember the past. God spoke through His prophets in order to rebuke and to remind them of their apostasy, and thus call them to repentance. He sought to call them back to His law. However, the people continued in their rebellion. Gilead and Gilgal became leading centers of idol worship. Hosea reminded them of their father Jacob (See Gn 29 – 31). He was a fugitive to Syria where he served Laban for his wife. ***By a prophet:*** God called Israel out of Egyptian captivity through Moses. He preserved the nation through the law that was delivered to them through Moses. But Israel rebelled, and thus provoked the Lord to anger. Israel's blood was upon her own shoulders. She would have to pay for her own sin by going into captivity.

Chapter 13

13:1-3 God gave birth to Israel. He preserved Israel. Their ingratitude through idol worship demanded their captivity, for they no longer represented the purpose for which they had been created as a nation. They were no longer a witness to the existence of God among the nations. In their state of apostasy, they had given up the right to bring the Son of God into the world. Since they could no longer be identified as the people of God, then the fulfillment of prophecies to the fathers could not be fulfilled through them in their apostate state. They had lost their identity as the people through whom God was working in order to bring the Redeemer of all nations into the world. ***Ephraim:*** As the father of one of the tribes of Israel, Ephraim was a dominant personality. When he spoke, others trembled. Ephraim became the predominant tribe of the northern kingdom. However, Ephraim fell into the apostasy of Baal worship, and subsequently spiritually died. ***Sin more and more:*** Hosea sarcastically reveals the absurdity of their idolatry. They would make images with their silver. They kissed them as symbols of fertility. They bowed down to them for good fortune and imagined conversations with them concerning their future. The Israelites were as children who were driven by their own imagination of what their idols would do for them. ***Cloud ... dew ... chaff ... smoke:*** All these figures symbolize the brevity of Israel. She would pass away as an idolatrous nation, though be restored as a repentant remnant. The Israel that would pass away, however, would never again exist as an idolatrous nation. The repentant remnant would banish idolatry forever.

13:4-8 God takes them back to their birth as a nation. He reminded them of their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. He preserved them throughout the wilderness wanderings. He provided them pasture for their flocks in order that they might live. But now that they had forsaken Him, He would become to them as the lion, leopard and bear. He would devour them through captivity in order to save from them a faithful remnant. His punishment was to bring them again to the truth that there is no other God but Jehovah God (Ex 20:3; Is 43:11).

13:9-11 ***Destroyed yourself:*** They were the victims of themselves. Years later they would look back on these words of Hosea with unbelief as to how ignorant they were in following after senseless idols. Their ingratitude for all that God had done deserved the punishment that He rendered to them. Their captivity was just punishment. ***Where now is your king:*** During the days of Samuel they cried out for a king (1 Sm 8:5). However, instead of leading them to God, their kings eventually led them away from God, beginning with Solomon. The northern kingdom, however, started with a king that led the people into idolatry. Jeroboam I set up idols that became the legacy of the worship of the northern kingdom. Since the kings led them away from God, after their return from captivity, they would never again be given a king on earth by God. During the time of Jesus' birth, Herod the Great, an Edomite, was made king over Israel by the Roman Empire. But he was not a God-anointed king.

13:12-14 ***Bound up ... kept in store:*** The sin was bound and stored up for punishment. ***Travailing woman:*** Israel was in the travail of sin and would give birth to a new nation (See Is 13:8; Mc 4:9,10). The nation needed a paradigm shift to righteousness, but was unwilling to go through the social chaos that would produce a new nation. Therefore, God had to work among the nations in order to bring the Assyrians upon her, and thus through captivity the repentant remnant would come forth. ***I will ransom:*** What Israel deserved for their total apostasy from God was total destruction. Left alone, the nation would have suffered such at the hands of the Assyrians. Death sought her. Annihilation was at her door. Verse 14

pictures God at the brink of her total destruction from history, but at the last moment a remnant would be saved by His grace. However, in order to repeat God's grace the remnant would have to repent of their idol worship.

13:15,16 The generation to which these words were addressed would be totally destroyed. Only their children would realize any future hope of an existing Israel. Though Ephraim was fruitful, the hot east wind would come from Assyria twelve years after this oracle and dry up the well of Israel's prosperity and posterity. ***Plunder the treasure:*** That in which they took great pride would be taken away by the Assyrians. ***Samaria will become desolate:*** This is the end of a nation that forsook the God of her birth. Shalmaneser would bring his Assyrian army against the nation and the northern kingdom would come to a horrible conclusion of destruction and captivity. After over 700 years as God's people in the land of Palestine, the northern ten tribes came to an end in 722/21 B.C. when they went into captivity. They would stay in captivity until the Medo-Persians overthrew the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. In 539 B.C. King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire would allow Jewish captives to return to Palestine. Thus the northern ten tribes would be in captivity for 186 years before they were allowed the opportunity to return the land of their inheritance. And when they set free, only a remnant would return.

Repentance And Renewal
(14:1-9)

Outline: (1) Plea for repentance (14:1-3), (2) Promise of healing (14:4-8), (3) Admonition (14:9)

Chapter 14
PLEA FOR REPENTANCE

14:1-3 Hosea exhorted the people to repent and turn to God. Iniquity was what led them astray, and thus repentance of their sinful idolatry was necessary in order that they return to God. The conclusion of Hosea's message to the people, therefore, was a last call for repentance. There was still time to repent and save themselves from the captivity of Assyria. ***Asshur:*** Or, Assyria. Assyria would not spare them. Egypt with their mighty horses could not save them. The works of their hands (idols) were useless. Only in God was there salvation from the impending calamity.

14:4-8 God responded to the plea of verses 1-3. He responded with a message of hope. The response portrays the transformation that Israel would go through during their captivity. The picture seems to be the time during their captivity when they repented of their idolatrous ways. When they repented, God received them back as His people. ***Anger has turned away:*** Their repentance turned God's anger away. In order to be a just God, God must pour out judgment on those who violate His law. Since all men sin (Rm 3:9,10,23), then only through grace can one have the judgment of God turned away. But His anger cannot justly be turned away until there is repentance. In order to enjoy the grace of God, and escape His judgment, one must live a repentant life (See comments 1 Jn 1:8-10). ***Dew:*** The figure is of God's loving care over them in a time of their calamity. They would sin, but God would always be there for their repentance. ***He will grow:*** Though they had suffered through the calamity of captivity, they would continue as a people beyond their captivity. ***Smell as Lebanon:*** They were previously stench in the nose of God while in their idolatrous state of apostasy. Now in repentance they had the sweet aroma of the cedars of Lebanon. They would spring forth in growth in captivity as grain germinates into a new vine. Their idols were dead pieces of wood. God was the one who answered their pleas. Their idols produced no fruit. All fruit came from God. Verse 9 is Hosea's conclusion. It is an address to those who would be wise in understanding the disciplinary ways of the Lord. Israel had forsaken God and turned to idols. It was just from Him to send them into captivity in order to generate repentance. If one would be wise, therefore, he will walk in the word of God. He will hunger and thirst after the word of God. Transgressors, however, will stumble over the word of God and fall.

Joel

WRITER

On the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 Peter confirmed Joel's authorship of this book (See At 1:16,17). Joel was the son of Pethuel (1:1). His name means "the Lord is God," or "Jehovah is God." We know nothing of Joel outside what is revealed of him in this book. He was the prophet of revival among God's people, speaking boldly the word of God from Judah to a nation God wanted to bring to repentance. In some way, therefore, his prophecy only delayed the judgment of God. He focused the minds of the people to the coming outpouring of the Spirit.

DATE

It is difficult to date the ministry of Joel or this book. From the text of the book, Bible students have suggested dates anywhere from the 9th century to the 4th century B.C. From the content of the book, the most probable date would be somewhere in the 7th century B.C. after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel.

BOOK

Joel was a prophet from Judah who warned the people of God concerning the coming judgment of God if they did not repent. His message was written in response to a devastating blight and drought that had ravaged the land.

Joel used the historical occurrence of the locust (grasshoppers) plague and drought as a warning from God that Israel must repent. A drought followed the plague, and thus a famine was upon the land at the time of writing. It was a severe environmental calamity wherein even the sacrifices at the temple were terminated (1:9).

Joel wrote the book in a poetic style, producing a literary vividness that spoke directly to the sin of the people. He wanted the people to know that the locust plague and famine were the direct work of God to encourage repentance. He wanted the people to realize that the coming day of the Lord meant a day of judgment. If they did not repent, the nation would be doomed.

One of the most profound prophecies of hope in reference to the beginning of the Messanic age is given in Joel 2:28-32 and quoted by Peter on Pentecost. This outpouring of the Spirit would not only signal a new beginning, but it would also signal the end of national Israel.

Interpretation Of Natural Calamity
(1:1 – 2:27)

Outline: (1) Description of the devastation (1:1-20), (2) The day of the Lord (2:1-11), (3) Call to repentance (2:12-17), (3) Promise of restoration (2:18-27)

Chapter 1

1:1-3 These were not the words of Joel, but the writing of Joel that was inspired by God, and thus the word of God. ***Hear:*** Joel called for attention to what he was writing to the people. What he was about to reveal was profound, for the fulfillment would be in the centuries to come. The fulfillment would not come for generations. The purpose for the writing of the book, therefore, was that they not forget what was said and recorded. We would assume that Joel did not understand all that he was writing, but wrote in faith concerning what God wanted revealed to His people (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12).

1:4-7 A severe blight of locust had just ravaged the land. ***Gnawing locust ... swarming ... creeping ... stripping:*** Though different Hebrew words are used in this text, we would assume that the different words refer to the four developing stages of the locust, not four types of locusts. They had stripped the land. The plague was so severe that the grape vines were stripped and the drinkers wailed for wine. ***Cut off:*** Joel attributes the plague to the work of God in order to generate repentance. ***A nation:*** The coming of the locusts was as a strong nation that would come upon the land to devastate it.

1:8-12 ***Virgin ... husband:*** In Jewish custom, when a young woman was betrothed to a man, the man became known as her husband (Dt 22:23,24; Mt 1:19). ***Sackcloth:*** A sign of mourning. ***Offering ... cut off:*** Because there was famine in the fields, there was no grain or oil for offerings. The farmers and vinedressers could not produce sacrifices for the priests, and thus the priests were going hungry.

1:13-20 ***Consecrate a fast:*** It was a time for fasting. The land was so devastated by the drought that there was no food. ***The day of the Lord:*** Herein is the definition of the day of the Lord. It was a day of destruction. It was a day of judgment on the people. It was a day in which God called on the people to repent. If they did not, they would perish. In this calamity, the people personally witnessed the destruction that prevailed upon the land. They stood helpless in a severe famine. Grainaries were empty. Pasture land was dried up. Rivers were dry. ***I will cry out:*** Man, animals and the land were all suffering. Joel was driven to cry out to the Lord for relief. Since fires had burned the remainder of the pasture lands and trees, the people were at the end of their existence in the land. God had brought them to their knees.

Chapter 2

THE DAY OF THE LORD

2:1-11 The day of the Lord is the judgment of God on His people (Is 2:12; Am 5:18). In this context, the judgment of the Lord comes upon the people in the form of locusts spreading across the land as a great army of men. It was a time to blow the trumpet to warn the people. The trumpet was to be blown in Zion, Jerusalem. The sound of the trumpet was to alert all trumpet blowers throughout the land in order that all be warned of the invasion of God's judgment through the plague of locusts. The picture that Joel reveals is that the land is totally devastated by the blight. Nothing was left. It was as if a fire had swept through the land, destroying everything in its path. The locusts came as a well-trained army. They scaled the walls of the city and entered into every home. The locusts were so numerous that they darkened the sky. Since the Lord led them with His voice of command, the message was that God brought the locust plague on the people instead of an actual army. However, if they did not repent, the destroying army would come later. If they did not repent because of the locust plague, then God would eventually bring the armies of the Assyrians and Babylonians on them.

CALL TO REPENTANCE

2:12-17 Joel calls on the people to repent. ***Fasting ... weeping ... mourning:*** Every aspect of a repentant heart is portrayed. The nation must utterly turn with remorse to the Lord (Ps 51:17; see At 3:19). The extent to which Joel calls on them to repent manifests the extent into apostasy to which they had gone. Joel's request for repentance was based on the severity of the plague and famine. The people were at the point of death because of the environmental calamity. He thus called on the people to repent in their hearts in order that God bring them relief from destruction. ***Elders ... children ... priests:*** The call for repentance was to all the people, indicating that the entire nation had developed a culture of sin. Though individuals within the society sinned, the culture promoted sin. The call for repentance, therefore, was more than an appeal to individuals. It involved everyone of society to turn to God. ***Heritage to reproach:*** As the surrounding nations observed the devastated land of Palestine, they would

conclude that the God of Israel was no different than the gods in which they believed. Joel's plea for repentance, therefore, was that God bring them relief in order that the nations not make this accusation against God.

PROMISE OF RESTORATION

2:18-27 ***The northern army:*** Specific reference in the text was to the locust plague. But we would also assume that God brought the plague on the land and the people from the north, symbolizing both the Assyrian and Babylonian armies that would in the future approach Palestine from the north as invading armies. However, if the people repented, Joel gives a wonderful picture of the restoration of their livelihood. The rains would come and the fields would once again produce. Man and animal life would be restored. In fact, the restoration of vegetation and animal life would be so abundant that the people could not miss the point that God was working behind the scenes of physical laws in order to provide abundantly for His people. Since the plague and drought had gone on for some time, possibly years, the restoration would continue as long as they remained faithful. The result would be that the people would never again be ashamed before the nations.

The Day Of The Lord
(2:28 – 3:21)

Outline: (1) Outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-32), (2) Judgment of God's enemies (3:1-17), (3) Victory of God's people (3:18-21)

2:28-32 Peter's quotation of these few verses in Acts 2 makes Joel's statement here very profound and prophetic of the Messianic age. Verses 28-32 are very significant in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in the coming ages at the conclusion of national Israel. The prophecy is a foundation upon which the activity of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament church would be defined. In Acts 2:16,17 Peter quoted this prophecy and made direct application of it to the Pentecost events of Acts 2:1-4. Therefore, Peter's reference to this prophecy introduces us to the significance of Joel's promise concerning the Holy Spirit. ***Afterward:*** In quoting this prophecy on the day of Pentecost in A. D. 30, Peter interpreted "afterward" to mean "last days," a reference to the last days of the Jewish commonwealth. The promise would be fulfilled after the return of the Jews from the dispersion of the Babylonian and Assyrian captivities. It would take place during the end of God's special work with the nation of Israel. The prophecy would find its fulfillment after the captivities and after the almost four hundred years of Jewish history between the ministry of Malachi to the days of John the Baptist. The fulfillment of Joel's prophecy would signify the last days of physical Israel in the eyes of God. We must keep in mind that when Peter quoted this text, he said that the fulfillment happened "in the last days" (At 2:16). The outpouring, therefore, took place in the last days, not at the beginning of the last days. Since the prophecy referred to national Israel, then the "last days" would refer to the last days of Israel. ***Pour out My Spirit:*** Reference here was to the manner by which the Spirit would come or be given. "Pour out" is a figure of speech, a metaphor. We must not think of the Spirit being literally poured out on all flesh as water is poured out of a container. We must not interpret the manner by which the Spirit is to come upon all flesh in a literal sense. In view of the fact that the Spirit was already with Jesus throughout His ministry (Mt 3:16), and was with the apostles (Mt 10:19,20) before Acts 2, we would interpret the pouring out of the Spirit to refer to a time when men (the apostles) would be immersed in the will of the Spirit at the beginning of the age of the Spirit. The Spirit would come upon those whom He would inspire to accomplish the purpose for which He was poured out. In Joel 2 God's initiative was emphasized in contrast to man's ability or righteousness to warrant the reception of the Spirit. From the perspective of when Joel wrote, this outpouring would be something that God would do. It would not be something that men would do in order to call upon God to take action. God was going to do something, but not something in response to the pleas or actions of man. In preparing the way for Israel to accept the crucifixion and the Acts 2 events, Zechariah prophesied that God would pour the Spirit out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zc 12:10,11). In that day, the Lord said He would pour out His Spirit (Ez 39:29). God promised that He would pour out the Spirit on the descendants of Israel (Is 44:3; see 32:15). The outpouring of the Spirit would be accomplished in a day that God planned. It would be a specific event at a specific time. ***All flesh:*** It must first be understood that "all flesh" does not refer to both believers and unbelievers. We do not understand this from the prophecy itself. When considering the fulfillment of the prophecy, the "all flesh" applies first to the apostles, and then to "those who believe" (See comments Mk 16:15-20). In other words, the Spirit would first be poured out on the apostles. From the apostles, it would then go to all those who believe through the laying on of the apostles' hands (See comments At 8:18). ***Sons ... daughters ... old men ... young men:*** In the context of Joel 2, what followed the statement of "all flesh" explains what was meant by the outpouring on all flesh. Sons and daughters, old men and young men, menservants and maidservants are included in the "all flesh." The Spirit would not be poured out on a special class of prophets as in the Old Testament Jewish dispensation. He would not be given only to special men who were prophets of the special Jewish people. He would be poured out on sons, daughters, old men, young men, male and female, servants and slaves of all people. The emphasis here was not so much that the Spirit would be given to every individual, but that He would be given to every class of individuals. The outpouring would be in contrast to how the Spirit was given during the Old Testament era. Under the Old Testament law, the Spirit was given to selected prophets who were a class of men and women by themselves (2 Kg 24:2; Hb 1:1). A time was coming, however, when even the lowest class of society (servants and slaves) would receive the Spirit as the esteemed prophets of the Old Testament. However, we would also assume that the Spirit would be a blessing to all those who believed, since all who obeyed the gospel would receive the Spirit (See comments At 2:38). ***Will prophesy:*** Not only would the outpouring be miraculous when the Joel 2 prophecy

was fulfilled, the result of the outpouring would be miraculous. Prophecy was first the speaking forth of the word of God. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the definition of prophecy was the preaching of the word of God. However, in reference to inspired prophecy, the preaching or teaching of the word of God was by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Pt 1:20,21). The Old and New Testament prophets spoke by inspiration in view of the absence of the inspired written word of God that was preached and taught by uninspired New Testament prophets. In the context of the promise of Joel 2, inspired prophecy is under consideration. The direct result of the outpouring would be manifested by the inspired work of prophecy by men and women after the outpouring. ***Wonders:*** Verses 30-32 of Joel 2 continue the prophecy of what God would do in the last days. The metaphors in these passages refer to the finality of the Jewish commonwealth. The fall of celestial bodies in prophetic literary language was used to figuratively portray the termination of earthly kingdoms (See Is 13:9,10; 34:4; Ml 4:1,5,6). The sun usually referred to the king of the nation. The moon and stars referred to the governors, generals and captains who received their power from the king. When a nation was to fall, the Old Testament prophets figuratively portrayed such by the fall of the sun, moon and stars. Joel did the same in reference to national Israel. He was prophesying of a time when the Jewish commonwealth would be terminated. The outpouring of the Spirit in the last days, therefore, was a signal of the end of national Israel in the eyes of God (See comments Gl 3:26-29). ***The great and awesome day of the Lord:*** The word "day" refers to the time when God would begin the end of national Israel. It was a great and awesome day for believers. It would be a sad day for those who would not be of those who believe. The "day of the Lord" would be a day of judgment for those who would not accept the results of the outpouring of the Spirit. ***Will be delivered:*** There is a possible double meaning to the deliverance of which mention is made in this statement. If we use the context of Joel 2 as the first hint to understand the meaning, then the deliverance refers first to escaping an impending destruction. In the context of the fulfillment of the prophecy in the first century, this would be deliverance from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, the physical deliverance of one's life from the destruction of Jerusalem depended on his obedience to the gospel, and being delivered from sin. When the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 took place, the early Christians experienced both deliverances (See comments Mt 24). Since they had obeyed the gospel, they were not in Jerusalem when the Roman army destroyed the city.

Chapter 3
JUDGMENT OF GOD'S ENEMIES

3:1-3 ***Bring again the captivity:*** The immediate promise would be to the restoration of Israel from the dispersion of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. ***I will also gather all nations:*** Though God gathered a remnant of national Israel out of the nations with the release of the captives by King Cyrus in 536 B.C., reference here seems to be to the gathering of spiritual Israel out of all nations through the preaching of the gospel. Reference would thus refer to the going forth of the gospel into all the world, and the obedience to the gospel by those in all nations (See comments Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16; At 8:4). ***Valley of Jehoshaphat:*** Some have assumed that reference here was to the Kidron Valley that is on the east side of Jerusalem. It was a place where many enemies of Israel fell in their efforts to destroy Jerusalem, specifically the 185,000 men of the Assyrian army during the reign of Hezekiah. The emphasis here is symbolic in the sense that the valley signified a place where God brings judgment on those who have caused calamity to come upon His people. ***I will enter into judgment with them:*** God would contend for His people, and thus bring them forth out of all nations to which they had been taken captive. He could call physical Israel out of the nations through those who would lead captives back to Palestine (See comments Et & Ne). Through the gospel, He would in the fulfillment of this prophecy call out of the captivity of sin those who were in the bondage of sin (See comments 2 Th 2:14). ***Cast lots for My people:*** When the Israelites were taken into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, their captors showed little consideration for the people.

3:4-8 This judgment is directed to the Philistines and Phoenicians, pagan nations that had dealt harshly with the children of Israel. They would be repaid for their participation in the calamities that came upon Israel. They had stolen the temple treasures of Israel and placed them in their pagan temples of false gods. They traded in slavery by selling Israelites to other nations. The very people to whom they had sold God's people, the Greeks, would eventually be the people who would conquer and sell them as slaves to other nations. When Alexander the Great of Greece conquered Tyre and Sidon, he plundered the cities. What the people of Tyre and Sidon had sowed, they reaped.

3:9-17 Judgment was coming on the nations for the harm that they had caused the people of God. The nations were summoned to the Valley of Jehoshaphat in order that judgment might be rendered. The nations are thus summoned to a final battle, but their adversary would be the Lord. And because their battle would be against the Lord, their defeat was certain. ***Valley of decision:*** The valley of judgment. The nations were summoned by God to judgment. Since the nations were overflowing with wickedness, it was a time when God had decided to bring them down. Their destruction meant deliverance for the people of God. ***Sun and the moon will be darkened:*** This was judgment language, symbolizing the termination of the kings and rulers of the nations that came under the judgment of God. ***Lord ... will roar:*** God roars as a lion to those who are enemies of His people (See 2:11; Jr 25:30; Am 1:2). However, He speaks of hope and strength to those who are His. When God carried out His judgment on the nations, the promise was that no conquering foreigners would pass through Jerusalem again. In the context, we would conclude that Joel was speaking of the new Jerusalem, and spiritual city of God, the church, that descended from heaven (See comments Rv 21). Since the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Syrian kings would pass through Jerusalem during the interbiblical

period, we would conclude that Joel went beyond this period to the new Jerusalem, the church, that was established in A. D. 30 (See comments in intro. to Dn). No foreigner, unbeliever, would pass through the church.

VICTORY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

3:18-21 The enemies of God's people, symbolized by Egypt and Edom, would no longer affect them in their new dwelling with God. The enemies would become desolate, but the people of God would dwell in safety under the cleansing blood of the Messiah. The new Jerusalem would continue into eternity, but the enemies of God's people would be avenged for their onslaught of wickedness against the work of God through His people. God would not acquit the wicked, but bring just judgment on them for their harm that they brought on His people.

Amos

WRITER

Nothing is known of Amos except what is revealed in this book. He was from Tekoa, a small mountain village about fifteen kilometers south of Jerusalem (2 Ch 11:6; 20:20). He was a shepherd and a farmer of sycamore fig trees. His name means "burden bearer." It has been suggested that he was a prophet who was called from the poorer people of Judah in order to preach to the rich urban dwellers. He too possibly suffered from the exploitation of the poor by the rich urbanites.

His humble nature was brought out in his statement that he was not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet (7:14). He was thus not a professional prophet, but supported himself as a shepherd and farmer. Neither did he claim to be from a school for the prophets (See 2 Kg 2:3). Because of the message that he had to deliver to Judah and Israel, God called him because he was a straighforward person. He was stern and fearless in the face of any adversary. Because he was deeply devoted to the law of God, he was courageous in delivering a message of judgment to those who were living contrary to the principles of God's will. He was a fearless preacher of righteousness to a nation that had strayed from the will of God. His example to all preachers is that they must take a stand for that which is morally right.

DATE

It is believed that this was one of the earliest books of the prophets to be written. Amos identified the time of his ministry to be two years "before the earthquake" (1:1). His ministry took place during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel, the northern kingdom. The date of the beginning of his ministry could have been somewhere around 760 B.C., and two years before the earthquake. In 8:9 he suggests that an eclipse occurred during his ministry. Archaeological evidence of the city of Hazor reveals that a severe earthquake took place in the middle of the 8th century B.C. An eclipse took place in 763 B.C., as well as an earlier eclipse in 784 B.C. The writing of the book could have taken place somewhere during the end of the 8th century. Amos thus prophesied in the twilight years of the northern kingdom.

BOOK

The book is written in poetic form, reflecting the literary skill of Amos. He used metaphors throughout the book to reveal the intensity of his message. In pure classical Hebrew he revealed a stern message of rebuke that was concluded with hope for the people of God. The book is both direct, but concluded with a message of hope.

In the New Testament, Amos was quoted by both Stephen (5:25-27; At 7:42,43) and James (Am 9:11,12; At 15:16,17). Amos also referred many times to the law of Moses, specifically to the book of Deuteronomy – Am 2:10 (Dt 29:5), Am 4:10 (Dt 4:30; 30:2), Am 4:11 (Dt 29:23), Am 5:11 (Dt 28:30-39).

At the time of writing, Hosea prophesied strongly against the Baal gods. Amos, however, focused little on false worship and pagan idols. He concentrated on the materialism of the people that led to the rich oppressing the poor. Israel had become very prosperous during the reign of Jeroboam II. As a result, their self-sufficiency in their wealth moved them away from trusting in God. The prosperity of some moved them to exploit the poor. As a result, social order was in trouble. There was great corruption in government and injustice in society in reference to the poor. The greed of the wealthy moved them to deal unjustly with the poor. Their religiosity, therefore, had digressed to the point that they had little concern for depending on God. Their religiosity also digressed into a faith that justified the exploitation of the poor. Amos thus came with a message that the northern kingdom would come to an end because of its twisted social order. His prophecy came to pass within thirty years after he delivered his message to the people. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom in 722/21 B.C.

Judgment Against The Nations
(1:1 – 2:16)

Outline: (1) Introduction (1:1,2), (2) Judgment against the nations (1:3 – 2:3), (3) Judgment against Judah (2:4,5), (4) Judgment against Israel (2:6-16)

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1:1,2 Amos was a simple farmer who was called to deliver a straighforward message to a wealthy urban generation that trusted in great material wealth. It was a God-ordained mission for one who was a humble farmer. ***The Lord will roar:*** When God speaks judgment to the nations, destinies are set. Nations will mourn as God works among the nations in order to bring about His mission through the nation of Israel. Israel would mourn over the calamity that God would bring upon them in order to salvage a repentant remnant through which to bring the Messiah into the world.

JUDGMENT AGAINST THE NATIONS

The irony of the judgments against the neighboring nations of Israel was that they were all descendants of Abraham through his various wives and handmaids. They were to be the buffer nations for Israel from the major kingdoms of the ancient world. However, in their envy, they became enemies of Israel, and thus reaped the judgment of God. The judgment was that they would all cease as nations, while Israel would continue until the coming of the Messiah.

1:3-5 ***Damascus:*** Syria would not escape the judgment of God. ***Three ... four:*** Three was the number of full sinfulness, plus four would mean that her sins were beyond full, and thus deserving of judgment. Gilead was often invaded by the Syrians and subjected to being plundered (See 2 Kg 8 – 13). ***Ben-hadad:*** See Is 17:1-3; Jr 49:23-27; Zc 9:1-4. ***Bar:*** This was representative of the fortifications of the city. Reference was to the bar that locked the main gate to the city. ***I will ... cut off:*** Syria was conquered by Tiglath-pileser of Assyria during the reign of Judah (2 Kg 16:9).

1:6-8 ***Gaza:*** The Philistines had been the continual enemy of the Israelites from the time they were established in the land of promise. In this judgment, Philistia, the principal city of the Philistines, was used to represent the entire nation. ***Carried away captive:*** The Philistines had carried away an entire people (See 2 Ch 21:16; Jl 3:4). They had delivered the captives to the Edomites who were the perpetual enemies of Israel. All of the principal cities of the Philistines would be destroyed. The judgment against the Philistines would be harsh. They would perish as a civilization of people.

1:9,10 ***Tyre:*** Those of Tyre failed to remember the covenant that existed between Solomon and Hiram (1 Kg 5:1,12). Because of her sin, she too would be destroyed. Tyre was first conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, and then by Alexander the Great of Greece. Alexander threw the rubble of the city into the sea in order to complete his conquest of the people who had fortified themselves on a small island off the coast. Tyre was a major port city with significant trade between the eastern countries and the coastal cities of the Mediterranean Sea. She lived in luxury and trusted in her trade. For this reason, God would bring destruction upon her strategic trading position among the nations.

1:11,12 ***Edom:*** The descendants of Esau, the Edomites, were a continual enemy against their brother, Jacob. The resentment of Edom against the descendants of Jacob began when the Israelites came out of Egyptian captivity. Because the Edomites were the perpetual enemies of their brethren, the Israelites, they would suffer the judgment of God. God's judgment against them was the termination of the Edomites as a nation of people.

1:13-15 ***Ammon:*** The Ammonites lived east of the Jordan River and east of Gilead. They were a cruel enemy against the Israelites who dwelt in the land of Gilead. Because they set themselves against the anointed nation of God, God would bring them down in captivity. They too would cease to exist as a nation.

Chapter 2

2:1-3 ***Moab:*** Neighboring Israel to the southeast, and situated between Edom and Ammon, Moab also was an antagonist against Israel. The Moab nation would die (See Ez 25). Though not recorded in history, on some occasion the Moabites evidently dug up the bones of the king of Edom and burned them as a show of contempt for the Edomites (Compare 2 Kg 3). At the time of Amos' prophecy, the Assyrian kingdom was threatening from the north. However, the judgment of these nations would not take place until the final conquest of the northern kingdom in 722/21 B.C., and finally by the conquest of the entire area by the Babylonian Empire in 6th century.

JUDGMENT AGAINST JUDAH

2:4,5 ***Judah:*** Amos turned from judgments against the surrounding nations, to Judah, the southern kingdom. ***Despised the law of the Lord:*** See comments Mk 7:1-9 (See Is 5:24; 6:9,10; 29:13; Jr 5:18-21,23,31; 23:25-28,32; 29:8,9,22-32; Hs 4:6). One despises the law of God by ignoring its principles as a way of life. Those who fall to study the word of God show disrespect for it because they do not honor it as God's inspired word for their learning and living (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11; 2 Tm 2:15).

JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL

2:6-8 ***Israel:*** When the Israelites were established as a nation in the promised land after coming from their wilderness wanderings, there were no poor in the land. God established the people as an agricultural community within the land, and everyone was given land to farm. However, when they started to ignore the law of God concerning the land rights, the greed of many individuals led them to buy out the land of others, and thus a poor class was developed. Through lies and fraud people were subjected to the greed of the rich. The digression of the northern kingdom into social and economic oppression was manifested in their subjection of their fellow Israelites to slavery. ***Man and his father:*** The moral state of the people had digressed to the point that a son and father would have

intercourse with the same young woman. ***Clothes taken as pledges:*** Any clothing that was taken as a pledge for a loan was to be returned before the night came (Ex 22:26). In this case they sinned by profaning the name of God by keeping and sleeping with the clothing, thus showing little concern for their fellow man. They purchased wine with the fines that they had taken from the condemned. There was no justice because judgments were made for gain.

2:9-12 God had taken Israel out of Egyptian captivity. He had made it possible for them to conquer the Amorites who were a strong people. When Israel entered the land, the Israelites were protected by God through the ministry of the prophets and Nazarites. All these privileges required them to be responsible to God. But they tempted the Nazarites to forsake their vows and commanded the prophets not to speak the judgments from God. They rejected the word of God, and thus condemned themselves to the judgment of God.

2:13-16 ***I will crush you:*** God's patience had run out. It was now time to bring judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel because of their rejection of the commandments of their Creator. As a cart totters by the weight put upon it, so Israel would be burdened with the calamities that God would allow to come upon her. They could not run from the calamity to come, or stand against it. They would not be strong enough as a nation to overcome the force of the Assyrians who would come against them. In the face of the enemy, they would be defenseless as a naked man. They would fall beneath the judgments of God.

Proclamations Of Israel's Judgment (3:1 – 6:14)

Outline: (1) Necessity of judgment (3:1-15), (2) Prepare for destruction (4:1-13), (3) Funeral dirge for a dead nation (5:1 – 6:14)

Chapter 3
NECESSITY OF JUDGMENT

3:1-8 ***You only I have known:*** God selected Israel as His bride, and thus committed Himself to her as a young man would commit himself to only one woman. Since Israel alone was chosen from the nations of the world, then she bore greater responsibility to be faithful to God (See 2 Ch 36:16; Is 1:2-4). Regardless of Israel's special attention and calling, she rejected the pleas of God through the prophets to follow after His commandments (2:4; 7:10-13). ***Two walk together:*** They had rejected the message of the prophets. But Amos reminded them that since God and the prophets walked together, the prophets were speaking the message of God. Both God and the prophets agreed on the message that was delivered to the people. ***Lion:*** God was the lion who roared through the prophets that turn Israel from her sin (1:1; Jl 3:16). ***Fall in a snare:*** The bird would fall to the ground only if caught in a trap. Israel's fall to the ground meant that she was caught in her own trap of sin. ***He reveals His secret to His ... prophets:*** God would bring no judgment on His people unless He first warned them. Thus the prophets went forth to warn Israel of impending calamity. However, they rejected the prophets (2:12). Since God, the lion, had roared and spoken His message of judgment, Amos stated that he had to preach the message of God (Compare comments At 4:17-20).

3:9,10 ***Ashdod ... Egypt:*** Ashdod is mentioned for Assyria. Assyria and Egypt were called upon to witness against the people of God. The irony of the scene that is presented here is that the idolatrous nations are called on to be a witness against those who were to be the righteous people of God. ***Do not know how to do right:*** This would be a statement against a culture of sin. In their ignorance of the word of God, they had created values and behavior after their own desires. The people had digressed to the point that they did not know what was right according to the commandments of God, for they had forgotten the law of God (Hs 4:6).

3:11-15 Amos reveals the fall of Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom. The city will be surrounded. When it falls, the royal palaces will be plundered. The city will be completely destroyed. ***Two legs ... ear:*** Some will be saved as two legs or an ear are saved from the mouth of a lion. Samaria is to be utterly destroyed, except for "a corner of a bed" or "the cover of a couch." ***The house of Jacob:*** Amos extended His proclamation of judgment to all Israel, both the northern and southern kingdoms. Since Judah would eventually follow in the steps of her sister to the north, she too would succumb to the judgment of God. ***Altars of Bethel:*** God's judgment on Israel would cleanse the land of all idolatrous altars to the Baal gods. ***Horns of the altar:*** There would be no place of refuge from the destruction. No one could go to the horns of the altar for protection (See 1 Kg 2:28). The judgment about which Amos spoke eventually came to pass a few years later when Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, brought down Samaria, and thus also brought an end to the northern kingdom (2 Kg 17:5,6). Those Israelites who were taken into captivity would never again enjoy their independence as a God-ordained nation in Palestine. They could assemble themselves as a nation in the land, and declare their own self-independence. However, this would not be the work of God. When the Son of God came into the world, Israel had fulfilled her purpose for being the people who would introduce the King of all the world into the world. Once the Son of God was incarnate in the flesh of man, Israel had fulfilled her purpose for existing as a unique people in a special covenant with God.

Chapter 4
PREPARE FOR DESTRUCTION

4:1-3 ***Cows of Bashan:*** In the words of a farmer, Amos focused on the rich women socialites of urban Samaria. Bashan was a productive land that was known for fine-looking cows (See Nm 32). These rich women socialites pressured their husbands into providing for them a luxurious life-style. They oppressed their husbands to exploit the poor in order that they be able to enjoy great wealth in luxuriant living. However, the calamity that would come through the destruction of Samaria, and the captivity of the people, would be laid on the shoulders of the women who lived in luxury. God cannot tolerate the oppression of the poor that is caused by those who seek to live a luxurious life. He considers it a tyranny in society when the rich maintain their life-style through their oppression of the

poor. If one is poor because he does not want to work, then he has made a choice of poverty. However, if one is poor because he is exploited by the rich, then the poor live in an unjust society. ***Take you away with hooks:*** This was not a pretty picture. During the destruction of Samaria, the dead bodies of the rich and famous would be dragged away to a refuse pile of corpses for burning. God's punishment on them would be the loss of all their wealth and their lives.

4:4,5 These words spur the idolatrous people on to intensify their sin for which they would be judged. Bethel and Gilgal were places of idolatrous worship, and thus places to which the people would go in order to increase the separation between themselves and God. In their zealous religiosity, they were actually intensifying the call for judgment to come upon them. ***Thanksgiving with leaven:*** Reference was to the leavened loaves offered in the praise offering. Instead of the required unleavened bread, they were bringing the leavened bread to the offering. ***You love to do:*** Their worship had turned from offerings to God to occasions to gorge themselves on the food they had brought for the offering. Their worship was no longer worship to God, but an opportunity to satisfy their own lust of the flesh.

4:6-11 God had worked consistently throughout Israel's history in order to turn the people back to His commandments. But they did not respond to the chastisement He brought on them in order to encourage repentance. They did not respond favorably because they had long forgotten their origins and the law by which God sought to direct their paths. Nevertheless, though they were indifferent to God's chastisement, He continued to plead with them through the prophets and calamity in order to encourage their return to Him. ***Cleanness of teeth:*** They suffered through drought where they had nothing to eat. Through blight and droughts they could not understand that the environmental calamities were the judgments of God on their wayward behavior. ***Destroyed some of your cities:*** In the end, God went to final and desperate measures in order to turn Israel from her sin. He allowed invaders to destroy some of the cities of Palestine as He had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 19).

4:12,13 Because they did not respond with repentance to the chastisement of the Lord, they should prepare to meet the God who would bring an end to Israel. ***He who:*** This doxology is to the glory of the creator of all things. Since He is the creator of all things, then He is sovereign over all that is created, even Israel. And since God was the creator of Israel, He would be just to take Israel out of existence as a nation. He would be just in His actions because Israel violated the conditions of the covenant that He had established with them at Mount Sinai.

Chapter 5
FUNERAL DIRGE FOR A DEAD NATION

5:1-3 ***She will no longer rise:*** At a climax of Israel's prosperity during the reign of Jeroboam II, Amos came forth with this prophecy of death. The people were secure in their own wealth, and thus did not think of falling as a nation. Therefore, they paid little attention to the words of Amos. However, the manner by which the rich were maintaining their wealth, was the cause for the fall of the nation. The wealthy were exploiting the poor, and the nation had turned to idolatry. Both their economic behavior and religious beliefs contradicted the commandments of God. The nation against which Amos prophesied, therefore, would come to an end because she had given up her identity as the people of God. In order for the repentant remnant to come forth out of apostate Israel, the people had to go into captivity. They had to be stripped of their material self-sufficiency and the idol gods in which they believed. Not only would the society of Israel that existed during Amos' ministry cease to exist, in her captivity Israel would lose her status as an independent nation. When the captivity ended in 536 B.C., a remnant returned to the land. However, the Jews returned to a land that was under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire. After the Medo-Persians came the Greek Empire, and then the Romans. In her sin, Israel gave up her right to be an independent nation within the land of Palestine.

5:4-8 ***Seek Me:*** Contrary to seeking religiosity that is created after the desires of men, the Lord here pleads that the people seek Him and His commandments. When men create moral standards after their own desires they digress into the moral chaos that was prevalent with the nation of Israel at this time in their history. Only the consistent moral standards of God build societies. The moral standards that men establish for themselves constantly change throughout history. ***Bethel ... Gilgal ... Beersheba:*** These were places of idol worship within the boundaries of Israel. Idolatry was the creation of an idea of a god after one's own imagination and desires. Therefore, when God called on the people to seek Him, He was calling them away from themselves, and thus away from establishing their own moral codes of behavior. As long as they determined their own values and directed their own behavior, they would continue to digress into moral degradation. And in a state of moral degradation, they were no longer representatives of God's people on earth. In order to bring the Messiah into the world, God could not work through a morally apostate people who had no knowledge of Him. ***You will live:*** They would escape the calamity that was soon to come upon them. ***Wormwood:*** This was a bitter plant that was symbolic of the injustice that was in the society. ***Cast down righteousness:*** In order to maintain the injustices of their society, they had to reject the will of God. When men love darkness more than light, they have taken society into moral degradation and away from God. ***Him who makes the Pleiades:*** Instead of creating a god after their own image, they should worship the God who created all things and man after His image (Gn 1:26,77). God is the creator of all things, and thus higher than all He created. There is thus no possible means by which man can imagine the fullness of God outside revelation from God. Since men cannot think beyond that which they experience in this physical world, then they cannot imagine or fully comprehend the God who is above this world. Only through God's revelation to man is man able to come to a knowledge of the one true and living God. Every imagination of God that ignores the revelation of the Bible, therefore, is a distorted understanding of God. ***Calls for the waters:*** This is possibly a reference to the flood of Noah's day when God brought forty days of rain upon the earth.

5:9-13 It is God who brings forth destruction on those who are socially wicked. In verses 10-13 Amos defined in detail those who were socially wicked. Decisions of judgment were made at the gate of the city. The socially unjust would protest against those who would give judgments against them. They maintained their luxurious life-style by exploiting the poor. The rich would be punished by the loss of that which they prized so much in life, their wealth and possessions. ***They take a bribe:*** When those who are in authority take bribes, there is no justice. The poor who can pay no bribes are marginalized and exploited for the sake of the rich. Since they could not pay a bribe, then they received no justice. ***Keep silence:*** In this context, the one who would patiently keep silent would be the one who waited on the vengeance of God. The faithful righteous, therefore, believed the prophets concerning the coming judgment of God on those who had oppressed them. The destruction of their oppressors was their liberation. When the northern kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians, the rich and their possessions were taken and the poor were left in the land to care for the land.

5:14,15 ***The remnant of Joseph:*** Amos turned to the righteous with this note of encouragement. They must continue to seek and love good. After Tiglath-pileser swept through the northern kingdom in 732-31 B.C., he left only a remnant of Ephraim in the land. The remnant were the poor who were to farm the land for the Assyrians.

5:16,17 ***Pass through you:*** When the Lord passed through the land, there was destruction (See Ex 12:12). In this case, He passed through the land with the Assyrian army. The dead would be so prevalent that the farmers would be called to mourn over their dead relatives in the cities. The professional mourners would be hired to lament both death and destruction (See Jr 9:17,18; Mt 9:23).

5:18-20 ***Day of the Lord:*** There were those who thought that they could escape the judgment of God because they were the chosen of God. The day of the Lord would be destruction of the enemies of Israel, but salvation for Israel. In this case, the opposite would be true. Israel would be destroyed and the enemies of God's people spared as the conquerors. The wicked of Israel were caught in a trap. In fleeing from the lion, they were caught by the bear. For those who are disobedient to the Lord, the day of the Lord was a day of doom.

5:21-27 The assemblies and offerings of the people had become heartless ceremonial performances. They were a socially unjust society carrying on with the rituals of religiosity that meant nothing to God. Obedience to ceremonies could not make them righteous before God. God asked them to take from His presence those ritualistic ceremonies they presumed would justify their unjust ways. If they would be righteous before God, they must repent of their oppression of those they exploited for their own gain. Ceremonial acts of worship do not make one righteous before God. Acceptable worship comes from the heart of the sincerely devoted, not from the performance of acts of religiosity. ***Wilderness forty years:*** The answer to the question was that they did not faithfully offer themselves to the Lord throughout the forty years of wilderness wanderings. ***But you have borne the shrine:*** While they were unfaithful in offering their sacrifices to the Lord, they were carrying the shrine of their king and the pedestal of their idols. They honored the gods that they had created after their own imagination, but failed to honor God in their hearts. The consequence of their disloyalty to God would be their captivity beyond Damascus. They would go into captivity in the land of Assyria.

Chapter 6

6:1-7 ***At ease in Zion:*** The rich were oblivious to the impending calamity that was approaching. Not only did they place their trust in the false security of ceremonial religious practices, but also in their wealth. They flaunted their wealth, thinking that it would deliver them from their enemies. They did not realize that it was their wealth that their enemies sought. Amos reminded them that they were no more important than Calneh and Hamath of Syria and Gath of Philistia, which cities had already fallen to the Assyrians. The self-indulgent leadership of Israel manifested little wisdom. As they indulged in the luxuries of consuming their wealth upon themselves, the Assyrians were building an army that would within forty years bring to an end the northern kingdom of Israel. This prophecy was made during the reign of Jeroboam II, a time of great prosperity in the northern kingdom. It was during this time of great prosperity that the prophecy of their doom was made. Thus the people never believed that such a wealthy kingdom as Israel could fall. The problem with the sense of security that comes through wealth is that wealth is never secure. Wealth always lessens the importance of God in one's life. The greater the wealth, the less one depends on God. The poor are thus blessed because their true sense of security can be found only in God.

6:8-14 ***Pride of Jacob:*** Israel found their security in their riches. But God had set Himself against their riches, and thus would take them down when they were materially strong. Israel's pride was in her self-sufficiency, not God. As in the days of Solomon, Israel began flashing her wealth before the nations. Within five years after the death of Solomon, however, Egypt invaded Judah and took all the treasures of the royal palace and temple. The same was about to happen in Israel. Because she took pride in her wealth, God was about to take her wealth away. ***Burns the bodies:*** It was the custom of the Israelites to bury their dead. But during the invasion that would come, the number of dead would be so great that they would have to burn the bodies. ***Keep silent:*** After removing the bodies from houses, they would not dare mention the name of the Lord, lest He hear and bring on more calamity. ***Gall ... wormwood:*** The social order of Israel was in moral chaos before God brought on them the calamity of the Assyrian invasion. That which they thought was justice was actually the bitterness of gall. And that which they believed was right was actually poison to society. ***Lo Debar ... Karnaim:*** The Hebrew word *Lo Debar* means "nothing." *Karnaim* means "horn." These were towns east of the Jordan that were taken by Jeroboam II. They were insignificant towns, and thus easily taken. Amos uses the names of the towns to signify their overconfidence in their military strength. Though they had

confidence in taking two insignificant cities, they would stand no chance against the mighty Assyrian army. The Assyrians would overwhelm them from the northern borders of Israel (Hamath) to the southern borders near the Dead Sea.

Visions Of Judgment
(7:1 – 9:10)

Outline: (1) Visions of judgment (7:1 – 8:3), (2) Sin and judgment (8:4-14), (3) Prophecy of restoration (9:1-15)

Chapter 7
VISIONS OF JUDGMENT

7:1-9 ***Locust swarms:*** This first vision of Amos pictures the locusts coming at the time when the rains came on the crops in their final stage of growth. There was great hope for a good crop, and then the locusts would devour it. The state possibly took in taxes their portion of the crops from the first cuttings, while the people were left with the remainder. The coming of the locusts stripped the crops bare, and thus the prophecy was a judgment of God against the sustenance of the nation. The self-sufficiency of the nation was attacked through blight before the arrival of the Assyrians. ***Fire:*** The second vision was of drought. Drought had set in and thus fire raged across the land to devour what was left from the locust devastation. ***Plumb line:*** This third vision was in reference to the moral character of the people. Locust plagues and drought were natural phenomenon that occurred in the natural environment in which the people dwelt. The plumb line was used to measure how straight a wall was to be built. In this vision the plumb line was used to measure the moral integrity of the people. They were measured and found wanting. The final judgment, therefore, came upon the people because of their moral degradation and apostasy from God. ***High places:*** The people had built for themselves locations that manifested their apostasy from God. These symbols of religious apostasy indicated that they had turned away from God, and thus could not stand when measured by the law of God. Regardless of their religiosity, they had fallen from the word of God.

7:10-13 ***Not able to bear all his words:*** The conspiracy was not a military uprising, but a pronouncement of the judgments of God. Amaziah was a religious leader who was on the payroll of the state, and thus brought charges against Amos before the state. He not only saw his payroll in jeopardy, but also the continuation of his position with the people, for Amos was bringing words of condemnation upon Jeroboam and the state. Amaziah thus considered Amos' words against the government to be treason. ***Flee:*** No true prophet of God would flee in the face of danger. If Amos was a coward in character, then certainly God would never have chosen him to bring harsh and direct judgments on the house of Israel. In times of apostasy, God must have strong men who stand up and teach the word of God to those who have turned their backs on the truth.

7:14-17 ***I was no prophet:*** Amos was not a prophet who represented the institution of professional prophets. He was a simple farmer whom God had chosen from outside the prophetic professionals. Thus Amos was saying to Amaziah that his financial well-being did not depend on the contributions of the people. He was not called to be a prophet because he sought the salary of a prophet. Amaziah, therefore, could not question his motives. And in fact, in the context, Amaziah never condemned Amos for speaking lies, neither did he speak against what Amos was saying. He simply threatened him that he should flee, for he knew that if what Amos was saying came true, then he was out of a job. ***Your wife ... your sons and your daughters:*** This tragedy that would come in Amaziah's family was a prophecy from God. Amaziah would die when Israel was invaded. His children would die, thus terminating his posterity, for none of his descendants would return from captivity. His land would be divided and given to others. The calamity that was coming would be the end of the house of Amaziah.

Chapter 8

8:1-3 ***Basket of summer fruit:*** This fourth vision depicts the summer fruit that had been picked. The picked fruit would eventually become rotten, and thus be discarded. Israel was ripe and ready to be discarded. ***I will not again pass:*** Though He had passed over them in the past and not brought judgment and destruction, the time of passing over without judgment had come to an end. It was a time for judgment and destruction. The destruction would be so great that the land would be defiled because of so many dead bodies. ***With silence:*** During the time of devastation, there would be no hope of deliverance. It would be useless for them to cry out to the Lord for deliverance (Zp 1:7; compare Hk 2:20; Zc 2:13).

8:4-6 ***Sabbaths:*** The Sabbath was given as a sign of the covenant between God and Israel. When they rested from their work on the Sabbath, they ceased from honoring the conditions of the covenant. In their greed, they exploited the poor. They saw the Sabbath rest as a day wherein they could receive no profit from trading. The greedy merchants did not want to give their poor laborers a day off. ***Dishonest scales:*** Cheating merchants were a sign of a morally degraded society. They overcharged the buyers in order to oppress the poor. The poor farmers received little for the goods that they sold to the rich who dwelt in the cities. The rich thus increased the poverty of the poor. ***Buy the poor:*** By increasing the poverty of the poor, they forced the poor to sell themselves into slavery in order to pay back that which they needed for daily sustenance.

8:7-10 ***I will never forget:*** When God refuses to forget, He will bring to judgment those who commit crimes against their fellow man. In this context, He would not forget the exploitation of the poor that the urban rich had committed against the rural poor. ***Land tremble:*** God brought judgment through earthquakes. ***Rise up like the Nile:*** As the Nile yearly rose up to flood the land, so God's judgment would rise up against the wicked. ***Cause the sun to go down:*** As an eclipse would bring darkness over the land, God would bring down the rulers of the land who allowed social evil to prevail among the people over whom they had responsibility. The purpose of government is to protect and work for the people (See comments Rm 13:1-7). But when government exists for its own benefit, then it has lost sight of its purpose. ***Sackcloth ... baldness:*** These signs of mourning and lamentation would be over the death of the

nation. Israel, the northern kingdom, would die as an independent nation in the land of Palestine. The Assyrian destruction of Israel would bring to an end the independence of the ten northern tribes, as the southern kingdom would be brought to an end in 586 B.C. when they were taken into captivity.

8:11-14 ***Famine ... of hearing the words of the Lord:*** No greater loss of opportunity could be experienced by man. They had already forgotten the law of God (Hs 4:6). They had rejected the law, and God took away the prophets. In the time of their destruction when they would seek God for deliverance, there would be no answer from God. They would thus faint because of their lack of spiritual nourishment from the word of God (Compare comments At 20:32; 1 Tm 4:6). ***Sin of Samaria:*** They had given themselves over to idolatrous religiosity. ***Dan ... Beersheba:*** These were generally posted as border cities of the northern and southern extremities of the land of the twelve tribes. In this statement Amos goes beyond the judgment of the northern kingdom alone. Judah was brought into the prophecy of condemnation because she too was guilty of the idol worship that had infested all Israel. Therefore, she too would suffer the destruction of her independence as a nation within Palestine. With the final captivity of the remnant of Israel in Palestine through the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the independent national Israel came to a historical close. Israel would never again be restored as a God-recognized independent nation in the promised land. A repentant remnant would be restored to the land after the fall of the Babylonian Empire, but only the Israelites as a race of people would be restored to land that was occupied by the Medo-Persians. After the Medo-Persian control of the land, the land would be occupied by the Greeks, and finally by the Romans. During the time of the Roman control of the land, the consummation of Israel in the church through Jesus would come to pass (See comments Gl 3:7,23-26; 6:16). There is a modern-day independent Israel in the land of Palestine. However, this nation was not established by God in order to bring the Messiah into the world. The Messiah has already arrived.

Chapter 9
PROPHECY OF RESTORATION

9:1-4 This fifth vision of Amos was one of final judgment on the nation. The nation could not escape the calamity that was to come. Though they would seek to escape by fleeing, God would find them in order to bring judgment upon them. Since God is omniscient and omnipotent, no one can hide from His presence. God's judgment would start at the altar and spread to all the nations.

9:5,6 In this doxology, Amos magnified the transcendent God who prevails over His creation (See 4:13; 5:8; 8:8). ***Rise up ... drown:*** When God rises up, He brings judgment that will overwhelm those of His creation as a flood of waters. No one will escape (Compare 2 Co 5:10). ***Waters of the sea:*** God calls on the nations to flood over His people. Through the proxy of the nations, God brought judgment on both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel.

9:7-10 The Lord was the God of all nations, for all nations find their birth in Him. He brought Israel out of Egyptian captivity. As He worked among the nations, He brought nations as the Ethiopians, Egyptians, Philistines and Syrians into existence. ***The house of Jacob:*** Amos' prophecy goes beyond the termination of the northern kingdom. Judah, the southern kingdom, is also in the prophecy of judgment. She too would be brought to an end. ***Sift ... among all nations:*** Through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, God would send His people as captives into many nations. When the Medo-Persian Empire would eventually conquer all the nations to which the Jews were sent, God would relocate them to the land of Palestine. However, only a faithful remnant would be restored to the land in order to establish the racial identity of Israel for the fulfillment of the prophecies to the fathers (See comments Et & Ne).

9:11,12 Within the prophecy of calamity, there was a prophecy of restoration. Because of James' quotation of this prophecy, its final fulfillment was in the establishment of the church (See comments At 15:16-18). ***Tabernacle of David:*** This is a metaphorical statement that refers to the church of the living God, the manifestation of the spiritual Israel on earth. This prophecy has been fulfilled according to the quotation of the prophecy by James in Acts 15. ***All the nations:*** See comments Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16. The building of the tabernacle would be through the preaching of the gospel to the nations. As all those of all the nations throughout the world were obedient to the gospel, the tabernacle (the church) would be built throughout the world.

9:13-15 God would return the captives of His people and restore their fortune in their land. There was a literal fulfillment of this prophecy after the conquest of the Babylonian Empire. The repentant remnant was restored to the land and the Israelites once again lived off the bounty of the land. ***Never again be pulled up:*** In view of the Messianic prophecy of verses 11 & 12, we could conclude that the Messianic prophecy continues into these final verses. Since God terminated independent national Israel with the captivity, the permanent restoration here to the land was not in reference to national Israel, but to the spiritual Israel of God, the church. The church would never be taken from their spiritual foundation in Christ (Compare comments Jn 10). Biblical interpreters must keep in mind that the land promise to Abraham was valid only until God accomplished His eternal plan through Abraham (See comments Gn 12:1-3). God promised that the Blessing that would bless all nations would come through the seedline of Abraham. Genesis 3:15 was in the background to this promise. In order to bring into the world the Blessing that would crush the head of Satan, God worked through the seed of Abraham in order to build the nation of Israel. In order for the nation of Israel to exist, they needed a land. God blessed the nation with the land of Palestine until the fulfillment of all promises and prophecies that were made in reference to the coming of the Seed of woman who would bless all mankind. When Jesus came, therefore, national Israel was dissolved in Christ (See comments Gl 3:23-26). Since God does not now recognize a national Israel with whom He has a special covenant relationship, then there was no need for a land possession for Israel after the coming of Christ and the establishment of the spiritual Israel in Christ.

Obadiah

WRITER

Of the thirteen men known as Obadiah in the Old Testament, we cannot identify any as the Obadiah of this book. All we know about him is found in this book. The name Obadiah means "servant of the Lord." From the nature of the book, we would conclude that he was patriotic to his people, and thus he had great consternation toward Edom for what they had historically done toward the Israelites in their times of calamity.

DATE

The book was written at a time when the Israelites were suffering at the hands of the Assyrians. It was a time when Jerusalem had been plundered, and the Edomites seem to have taken part in the plundering (Ob 11). They took delight in the hardships of the people of God, conspiring with the enemies of Israel (Ob 12). At one time when the Israelites were fleeing their aggressors, the Edomites blocked their escape and sold them into the slavery over their conquerors (Ob 14).

Except for the final conquest of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians, it is difficult to determine the period of national calamity during which Obadiah gave his message. There were four different occasions when Jerusalem and Judea were under attack by foreign invaders. Shishak, king of Egypt, took the city during the reign of Rehoboam in 926 B.C. (1 Kg 14:25,26; 2 Ch 12:1-12). During the reign of Jehoram, the Philistines and Arabians plundered the city in 848-841 B.C. (2 Ch 21:16,17). Jehoash, the king of the northern kingdom, defeated Amaziah, king of Judah, in 790 B.C. (2 Kg 14:8-14; 2 Ch 25:17-24). And finally, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. (Jr 52:12-17). Obadiah probably delivered his message during the final conquest of Jerusalem when Israelites fled from Jerusalem and Judea, and subsequently, were captured and sold into slavery by the Edomites. However, some affirm that the date of Obadiah's prophetic ministry and writing of the book was around 845 B.C. Since Obadiah does not mention the total destruction of Jerusalem, and the final captivity of the southern kingdom, it is assumed that the book was written during one of the invasions of Judah. Since earlier prophets alluded to portions of Obadiah, it is assumed that Obadiah's ministry would have taken place before the prophetic ministries of both Amos and Jeremiah (Compare Am 1:6 to Ob 6; Am 9:2 with Ob 4; Am 7:12 with Ob 19; Jr 49:7-16 with Ob 1-9). However, the nature of the message indicates that Obadiah was delivering final judgments on Edom for all the antagonism that she had committed against Israel in the past. Since these final judgments would include all their sins against God's people, we would conclude that the message was delivered after the final fall of Judah in Palestine at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and contemporary with Jeremiah.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Understanding the historical relationship between Edom and Israel helps us understand the animosity that the Edomites had toward the Israelites. Isaac had twin sons, Jacob and Esau (Gn 25:2-26). When the two boys were grown, by deceit, Jacob obtained Esau's birthright (Gn 25:27-34; 27:1-45). This was the beginning of Esau's resentment toward his brother. It seems that Esau's anger was passed on to his heritage that came from his loins (See Am 1:11; Ml 1:2-5). Esau became the father of the Edomites, and Jacob the father of the Israelites. When Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, they were admonished not to abhor their brethren, the Edomites (Dt 23:7). However, the Edomites refused to allow Israel to pass through their land on their way to the promised land (Nm 20:14-21). Nevertheless, God commanded Israel that they were not to take any of the territories of the Edomites (Dt 2:1-8). God even gave a provision that after three generations, an Edomite could become a part of the assembly of Israel (Dt 23:7,8). However, because of the great animosity that the Edomites harbored toward Israel, they were the continual antagonists of Israel. Therefore, because of their evil behavior toward Israel, God condemned them to termination as a nation (See Is 34:5-7; 63:1-4; Jr 49:17; Ez 25:12-14; 35:1-15).

The irony of the confrontation between the Edomites and the Israelites was in the appointment of Herod in 30 B.C. by Octavion, Caesar of Rome, to be the king over Judean territories. Herod was a descendant of the Edomites, for this reason he was never accept as a true king over Israel.

Outline: (1) Judgment of Edom (1-9), (2) Reasons for judgment (10-14), (3) The day of the Lord (15-21)

JUDGMENT OF EDOM

1-4 ***Vision:*** See Is 1:1; Jr 14:14; Ez 7:26; Nh 1:1. ***Rumor:*** Obadiah may be referring to a proclamation by another prophet of God (See Jr 49:14). ***Ambassador:*** A messenger had been sent out to the nations to stir up animosity against Edom. Reference here could also be to the general animosity against the Edomites because of their unfriendly spirit with all

other nations. If this was true, then God was working among the nations in order to bring about His judgment on a nation that had worked against His Messianic mission through the nation of Israel. ***I will make you small:*** God's judgment of the Edomites would terminate them as a nation, but preserve a few for the sake of heritage. ***Dwell in the clefts:*** The security of Edom, was because Petra, or Sela, was located in a rock valley. It could be accessed only through a deep ravine that was about five meters wide, with rock walls on each side that extended upwards about sixty meters. Because of its secure entrance, it was almost impossible for any invading army to conquer the city. The Edomites thus enjoyed a natural protection from all invading enemies. Their impenetrable capital, therefore, led them to be arrogant concerning their existence as a nation. It was from this advantage point that they controlled the trade routes between Africa and the northern countries that passed through Palestine. ***Eagle ... stars:*** Edom became arrogant because of her strategic location (See Ez 35:13). Nevertheless, God would bring the Edomites down because they had been the enemies of His people.

5-9 ***Thieves ... grape gatherers:*** If thieves came through to steal, they would leave something. Even raiders on vineyards would leave something for the owners. However, God would leave nothing when He came through with His judgment. ***Esau:*** The father of the nation stands for the nation. Esau's heritage had little respect among the nations because of the legacy that he had passed on to his descendants. ***Ransacked:*** The nation would be stripped of everything. She would be left a desolate nation, and thus abandoned. ***Men who were at peace with you:*** Edom would fall through treachery. Those with whom she had made alliances would turn on her, and thus there would be no major battles or calamity that would befall the capital. God would bring down this nation through a process of international events. The Edomites as a nation would disappear from the civilizations of the world by a dissipation of their race among the nations. What eventually happened in the history of the Edomites was that in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., the Edomites were eventually forced from their country by the Arabians who migrated westward from Arabia. Many Edomites eventually settled in the southern regions of Palestine, from which group came the family of Herod the Great whom Octavion eventually established as a king over Judea before the birth of Jesus. Thus through migration, the Edomites were dislodged from their secure location in the rocks of the Sinai Peninsula. ***Teman:*** This was the primary city of Edom that was located only a few kilometers from the naturally fortified city of Petra.

REASONS FOR JUDGMENT

10-14 ***Against your brother:*** Obadiah lists the sins of the Edomites against the Israelites, their brethren. When the Israelites were oppressed, the Edomites took advantage of their calamity. Edom's sins involved unloving acts of antagonism against Israel (See Nm 20:14-21). These acts of antagonism reached their climax when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. It was a time when the Edomites stood afar off, waiting for the city to fall. ***You were as one of them:*** Because the Edomites stood idly by when Jerusalem was under siege, her indifference made her a partaker with Nebuchadnezzar's army. To make matters worse for the Israelites, the Edomites took part in the plundering of the city of Jerusalem after it fell to the Babylonians. From the text, it seems that the Edomites even aided the Babylonians as they plundered the city. ***Stood in the fork:*** In some way the Edomites collaborated with the Babylonians in both plundering the city and in making sure that the escaping Israelites were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. By behaving in such a treacherous manner, the Edomites possibly sought to save themselves from the Babylonians. They thus sacrificed their brother for the purpose of saving themselves from destruction (See Jr 49:7-22; 2 Kg 24).

THE DAY OF THE LORD

15-18 ***Day of the Lord:*** This was a great day of calamity that came from the Lord on those against whom the Lord had set His judgment (Jl 1:15; 3:14; Zp 1:7). In this judgment against Edom, the judgment was more than a victory of one nation over another. It was against the Edomite race. ***Return on your own head:*** The Edomites would reap what they had sown (See Mt 6:14,15; 18:21-35; Lk 6:31; Gl 6:7-10; Js 2:13). ***Swallow down:*** The Edomites would be devoured by the nations of the world. They would be devoured to the point that it would be as if they never existed as a nation (See Jr 25:15-28). ***Deliverance ... holiness:*** The surrounding nations that persecuted and were antagonists against Israel would go out of existence as independent nations. Some would cease to exist as a race of people, being assimilated into the races of conquering nations. But the Israelites would continue to exist in history, though not as an independent nation within the borders of Palestine. Israel would continue to exist in holiness in the sense that she would remain separated from the nations of the world. She would maintain her identity as a people. ***Possess their possessions:*** When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C., the Medo-Persian Empire allowed them to take possession of their former lands. However, the returnees were still under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire. God, through the Medo-Persian Empire, protected the land rights of the returned Jews. God used foreign nations as the Assyrians and Babylonians to discipline Israel. But He also used foreign nations as the Medo-Persians, Greeks and Romans to protect His people in the land. God knew that His people after their return from captivity would never be a strong military nation, and thus He used other nations in order to preserve the Jewish race until the coming of the Messiah, at which time He dissolved physical Israel into spiritual Israel, the church (See comments Gl 3:26-29). ***Not be any remaining ... of Esau:*** As a race of people who would be identified as a nation, the Edomites would cease to exist (See Is 11:13,14). ***House of Jacob:*** After the Babylonian captivity, the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel would be restored as one nation (Js 1:1; Ez 37:16-22).

19-21 ***The south:*** Or, the Negev. When the Israelites went into captivity, the Edomites arose from their territory and claimed some of the lands of the Israelites. But this would be reversed when the Israelites were allowed to return to Palestine

by the Medo-Persians, who at the time in 536 B.C. controlled all the land of Palestine, and lands reaching down into Egypt. ***The captivity ... of the children of Israel:*** Reference here is to the captives of the northern kingdom of ten tribes that were taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. ***Captivity of Jerusalem:*** These would be those Israelites of Judah who were taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. All the captives of Israel, therefore, whether of the Assyrian or Babylonian captivities, would be returned to reclaim their possessions in the land of Palestine. There would thus be a restoration of a remnant of all twelve tribes. However, the Edomites would lose their land possession, never to be claimed again. ***Saviors:*** The wise rulers of the returned Israelites would be made rulers over any remnants of the Edomite race. ***The kingdom will be the Lord's:*** Verse 21 seems to be Messianic in the sense that from Israel would come the Savior who would be King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). He would reign over all people, including any remnants of the Edomite race (Compare Ps 22:28; 103:19; Zc 14:9; Rv 11:15; see comments Ep 1:20-23).

Jonah

WRITER

The writer of the book does not specifically name himself as the writer. We assume he is the writer from the statement that is made of the writer in 1:1. He was the son of Amittai. His name means "dove." He was from Gath-hepher in the territory of Zebulun in northern Israel. His ministry took place during the reign of Jeroboam II who was king of the northern kingdom of Israel.

The ministry of Jonah began after Elisha. He was contemporary with Amos and Hosea who prophesied in the northern kingdom, and Isaiah and Micah who ministered in the southern kingdom. The contents of the book point out that Jonah was very patriotic to the Israelite people. However, his patriotism led him to be somewhat prejudiced in relation to concern for the salvation of other peoples. By this time in the history of the northern kingdom, the Israelites had long forgotten their responsibility of being a light to the Gentiles. Instead of reaching out to the nations with their belief in the one true and living God, they had become very introverted culturally.

DATE

The reign of Jeroboam II began around 782 B.C. Since Jonah's ministry was during the reign of this king, then Jonah's ministry took place at the end of the northern kingdom. The north would fall to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. The book was possibly written, therefore, during the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II.

BOOK

Since the ministry of Jonah to Nineveh took place in the latter years of the northern kingdom, then we understand why God sent Jonah to Nineveh. Through the prophets Isaiah, Amos and Hosea, God revealed that He was sending His people into Assyrian captivity. In order to prepare the way for them, He wanted Jonah go to the Assyrian people and preach repentance toward the one true and living God. Jonah was the religious cultural bridge to bring the hearts of the Assyrians closer to God in preparation for the coming of the Israelite captives. It seemed that Jonah did not understand this mission, and thus he manifested this resistance to God's call to go to Nineveh. Though Jonah knew that his fellow prophets had stated that the northern kingdom was going into Assyrian captivity, he did not want to give the Assyrians any opportunity to escape the impending threat that was coming within forty days of his arrival in Nineveh. He did not want to give Israel's enemies any advantage of salvation by giving them the opportunity to repent. Nevertheless, God accomplished his mission through the reluctant prophet, and thus spared the inhabitants of Nineveh from the approaching danger of destruction.

The irony of the story of Jonah is that the Assyrian king and people repented in sackcloth and ashes in response to the message of Jonah, while at the same time the kings and people of the northern kingdom of Israel would not repent in response to the preaching of Jonah, Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. At this time in history, God's people had digressed so far away from the knowledge of God that the pagan nation of Assyria to whom Jonah was sent to preach was more responsive to the message of God than God's people (See comments Hs 4:6). The lesson of the book of Jonah is that God's people can become so arrogant and withdrawn, as they were in the years of Jeroboam II (See comments of Am), that they are beyond repentance. In the case of Assyria, God had to raise up people who would carry on with the message of the one true and living God in order to bring Israel out of idolatry. Jonah is an example of the preachers of God's people who become so self-consumed with their ministry with the people of God that they, as Jonah, fight against God's mission to go out to those who would be sincerely repentant if they only had an opportunity to hear the message of the good news of God. There are many lessons we reap from the book of Jonah. But this important lesson is evident throughout the book, teach-

ing us that as the people of God we must never become so consumed with ourselves that we withdraw from those to whom we are sent to preach the gospel (Mk 16:15,16). Our gospel mission is to the world, not to ourselves.

The Flight Of Jonah
(1:1 – 2:20)

Outline: (1) Flight from responsibility (1:1-14), (2) Overboard and overpowered (1:15 – 2:10)

Chapter 1
FLIGHT FROM RESPONSIBILITY

1:1-3 Though the mission of Jonah that is revealed in the book was specifically to the city of Nineveh, his ministry as a prophet extended over several years (2 Kg 14:25). ***Go to Nineveh:*** This capital of the Assyrian Empire has been estimated to have had a population of almost 650,000 people at the time of Jonah's ministry. The administrative district of the city with all its suburbs was at least 75 kilometers in circumference. The inner city was surrounded by a wall that was approximately 30 meters wide at the top. There was a great temple in the city and a library that is believed to have contained over 10,000 tablets of ancient writings. ***Wickedness:*** The sinful actions of the Ninevites were evidently well known among the Near East nations (See comments Nh). We would assume that Jonah had some apprehension about going to this city because of her wickedness. Since he was a prophet from Israel, he may have felt threatened by those of this foreign nation that would in the years to come, bring down destruction on the northern kingdom of Israel. ***Jonah rose up to flee:*** Jonah later confessed that he fled because he feared that Nineveh would repent (4:2). The Assyrians were the future captors of Israel, and thus Jonah did not want to give the Assyrians the opportunity to repent and be saved by a gracious God. If they repented, then God would spare the city from destruction. During his ministry to the northern kingdom of Israel, the northern kingdom under Jeroboam II prospered greatly. It may have been that Jonah was living in a time when he did not want to be seen as a prophet who encouraged any of the enemies of Israel. His prophecy to a foreign nation would possibly have been viewed by those in Israel as unpatriotic, and thus disadvantageous to the well-being of Israel. Through the prophets, the Israelites had been warned of their future fall to a nation that would invade from the north. It may have been that Jonah did not want to be a part in aiding any nation to the north of Palestine. The reasons for Jonah's flight from his commission were complicated, but great enough to make this prophet of God to flee from his responsibility to all those who would be responsive to the message of God. ***From the presence of the Lord:*** Jonah certainly knew that he could never escape the presence of the God who is everywhere. Whatever his reasons for going to Tarshish to the west, it was in the opposite direction from where he was commissioned to go to Nineveh to the east. ***Tarshish:*** This may have been a Phoenician colony that was in Spain (See Is 23:1-12; Ez 27:12,25).

1:4-9 ***Sailors were afraid:*** These sailors had experienced storms before in the Mediterranean Sea. However, there was something more severe about this storm, for the ship was about to break up. The situation was so perilous that each sailor began to plead to his own god for deliverance. They then threw overboard the cargo in order to lighten the ship. While all this turmoil was transpiring, Jonah was fast asleep. ***O sleeper:*** Jonah was not only sleeping, he was in a deep sleep, totally unaware of the danger in which all on the ship were in. ***Your God:*** The Hebrew word here refers to all gods in general. The sailors were all religious, believing in the gods of their imagination and particular nations. To them, the God of Israel was only one god among all the gods of the nations. ***Cast lots:*** The fact that sailors cast lots indicated that they did not believe that this was an ordinary storm (See Nm 26:55; Ja 7:14; 1 Sm 10:20,21; At 1:26). We would correctly conclude that God determined the results of the casting of the lots, for the lot fell on Jonah. ***Made the sea:*** The One who was the creator of all things was at this time creating a situation wherein His prophet would repent of his lack of submission to His will (See Ps 8:1-4; 65:5-7; 107:23-32; 139; compare Mk 4:35-41).

OVERBOARD & OVERPOWERED

1:10-17 ***Exceedingly afraid:*** They concluded that if the God of Jonah could cause such a great storm at sea, then certainly He was a God that must be feared. They thus could not understand why Jonah would have offended such a God. During the time of the casting of the lots, and the questioning of Jonah, the storm increased. ***Cast me out into the sea:*** It seems that Jonah also realized that there was no hope. His valiant request manifested that there was no hope for anyone lest he sacrifice himself for them. He knew that God was the cause of the storm. ***Cried out to the Lord:*** The sailors at this time changed in using a generic term in reference to the God of Jonah, to the specific reference that the Jews used, Jehovah God. The response of the sailors reveals that God used the flight of Jonah and the storm to convert a ship of sailors. At least the sailors realized that no one could flee from the God in whom Jonah believed and had been commissioned (See Ps 139:7-10). ***Cast him into the sea:*** Though they were reluctant to fulfill the request of Jonah, they obviously realized that they were all going to perish. ***The sea ceased:*** See comments Mt 14:22-33. These sailors had the same response to the calming of the sea as the disciples of Jesus when He calmed the sea. They realized that the God of Jonah had control of the seas. Regardless of Jonah's flight from his missionary responsibilities to Nineveh, he here became a witness to the wonders of God among a group of sailors who had previously believed in pagan gods. ***Prepared a great fish:*** It is not necessary to compare this great fish with any known whale that exists today. The record states that God prepared a special fish for this mission. The God who created all things could certainly create a dwelling for Jonah in order to give him time to come

to his senses. And since Jesus confirmed this event as a historical fact, then we cannot deny the facts of the event itself (Mt 12:40).

Chapter 2

2:1-10 In confessing and promising obedience, Jonah praised God for His deliverance from the depths of the sea. His prayer in the belly of the big fish, while entangled with sea weeds, was a prayer of repentance. He realized that his life meant nothing if it was not given in obedience to the will of God. ***Sheol:*** In Hebrew theology, this was the realm of the dead. The situation in which Jonah was at the time of his prayer of lamentation, was as if he were dead (See Ps 88:3-12; 120:1; 142:1; compare Lm 3:55-58). ***You had cast me:*** These statements were written after the events that led up to Jonah being vomited out on dry land. Jonah concluded that all his ordeal was the work of God. He realized that God used his ordeal to bring him to repentance and acceptance of his mission to Nineveh. ***Out of Your sight:*** Because of his disobedience of the commission to go to Nineveh, Jonah realized that he was cast out of favor by the omnipresent God. ***I will look again:*** Repentance was in his heart. It was if he were saying that he would obey the mission if delivered from the situation. ***I remembered the Lord:*** When in a time of despair, Jonah did not accuse God of some injustice. He acknowledged his sin that brought him to the calamity in which he was. ***Forsake their faithfulness:*** Those who have given themselves over to the imaginations of their own misguided knowledge of the God, will not in the time of calamity, know the God to whom they should voice their repentance (Compare comments Hs 4:6). ***Voice of thanksgiving:*** Because he realized that he was the victim of his own disobedience, Jonah voiced thanksgiving to God for His deliverance. ***I have vowed:*** We would conclude that Jonah was delivered from the belly of the fish because he repented, and thus promised God that he would assume his commission to go to Nineveh. He thus did not go back on his word, for from the dry beach he headed for the destiny that God had given to him.

Recommissioned
(3:1-10)

Outline: (1) Obedience to the mission (3:1-4), (2) A nation repents (3:5-10)

Chapter 3
OBEDIENCE TO THE MISSION

3:1-3 ***Go to Nineveh:*** This was Jonah's destiny. His ministry of preaching was without social challenges within his own homeland. However, God's commission that he go into a foreign culture and preach to Gentiles at first seemed too great for a culturally introverted Jew. Nevertheless, the bigoted Jew made his way to Nineveh, fulfilling his calling to preach repentance to a people whom God also loved. ***Exceedingly great city:*** Jonah would have certainly been impressed with the size of Nineveh. Archaeological investigations have revealed that the inner walls of the city were about ten kilometers in circumference, having about 1,500 towers. In this context, reference was to the complete administrative area of Nineveh. Including all the suburbs, the city expanded to an distance of at least 75 kilometers in circumference. ***Three days' journey:*** It is difficult to determine the correct understand of the Hebrew text at this point. Some translators have suggested that the size of the city given in this contexts meant that it took three days to walk around the city. Others have suggested that the meaning here is in reference to the time that Jonah spent in preaching within the city. If this is the meaning, then Jonah would have probably stopped at different locations within the city in order to preach his message during the three days.

A NATION REPENTS

3:4-10 ***Yet forty days:*** This would not be the totality of Jonah's message, but the overview of the message that he said to the people. Nineveh was a vile city of wickedness. Since the judgment was to come within forty days, then certainly there must have been some impending threat by foreign powers that was about to overrun the city. With the stimulus of the prevailing threat, and the message of Jonah, the king and people knew that there was only one recourse, and that was repentance. ***The people of Nineveh believed:*** More is involved in this repentance than what is said. Jesus said that they *"repented unto the preaching of Jonah"* (Mt 12:41). They not only repented of their vile wickedness, but turned in obedience to that which Jonah preached. Their repentance involved a change in behavior, not simply a change in thinking. Thus the Israelite prophets, whose message would not change the lives of their own people, changed the lives of those who were not God's chosen people. The nation that would eventually become the captors of God's people were more receptive than those who were God's chosen people. For this reason, the testimony of the Ninevites' repentance would rise up in judgment against all those who would refuse to repent (See comments Mt 12:38-41). At this time in history, the northern kingdom of Israel had become so resistant to the preaching of the prophets that they were more hardened to the word of God than those who took them into captivity. Restoration movements to the word of God, as was Israel when delivered out of Egyptian captivity, can sometimes move so far away from their dedication to the word of God, that they become less receptive to God's word than those who have never had the opportunity to hear the truth of God's word. ***Turn from his evil way:*** The mission of Jonah was not only to manifest God's concern for the Ninevites, but to prepare the way for God's people. If we accept the early date of Jonah's ministry, then the purpose for Jonah's mission was to prepare the way for the captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel. Later in history when God took the southern kingdom into Babylonian captivity, He also prepared the way. He sent Daniel and his three friends to Babylon several years before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (See comments Dn). God cared for His people while they were in Palestine, as well as while they were in the lands of their captors. ***Nineveh will be overthrown:*** The Ninevites were shocked by the possible fall of their empire, and thus the receptivity of the people was made possible by the work of

God to bring them closer to the world view of the Israelites. Their repentance, therefore, paved the way for the coming of many captive Israelites into their culture after the 722/21 B.C. conquest of the northern kingdom. ***Sackcloth ... ashes:*** Sackcloth was a coarse garment made of goat's hair. The garment was worn by those in mourning (See 1 Kg 20:31; Is 15:3; Jr 49:3; Ez 27:31). When an individual was in deep mourning, he would sit in ashes, indicating the worst possible emotional condition in which one was at the time of mourning. ***God relented of the calamity:*** On this occasion, the Ninevites turned from their wickedness. They were thus spared the calamity that God was going to bring on them within forty days. However, this would not be the case when the city eventually fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Both Nahum and Zephaniah prophesied against Nineveh before the 612 destruction. At that time, they did not repent, and thus they fell, never to rise again. It is for this reason that the early date of Jonah's ministry is to be preferred, since Nineveh was spared in reference to the threat at the time, from which threat of destruction they were spared because of their repentance. God's grace was extended to them because of their repentance, which thing God always does in reference to our repentance.

Conversation With God
(4:1-11)

Outline: (1) Displeasure of Jonah (4:1-3), (2) Counsel of God (4:4-9), (3) God's world mission (4:10,11)

Chapter 4
DISPLEASURE OF JONAH

4:1-3 From what Jonah states here, it would seem that he believed his fellow contemporary prophets Amos, Hosea and Isaiah who said that Israel would fall to an invading nation from the north. He surely identified this invading nation to be the Assyrians (See Hs 9:3; 11:5,11; Am 5:27). What he did not understand was the purpose for his mission. Because of his resentment against the Assyrians, he failed to understand that his mission was to prepare the culture of Assyria for the arrival of the Israelite captives who would come less than forty years from the time of his preaching. The saving of the Assyrians from the unknown impending threat that would come upon them within forty days was, to Jonah, the condemnation of his own people to destruction. He believed the prophets who said that Israel would go into captivity because of their wickedness. ***Please take my life:*** In his bigotry and resentment of the repentance of the Assyrians, Jonah pouted. Simply because one was inspired to preach the word of God did not guarantee that the preacher's character would be changed by that which he preached (See comments Gl 2:11-13). Jonah possibly felt embarrassed before his own countrymen because he had preached to the nation that the prophets in Palestine, Hosea, Amos and Isaiah, said would be the nation that would conquer them. He possibly thought that his own life might be in danger when he returned to his homeland, and thus requested that he die before returning home.

COUNSEL OF GOD

4:4-9 God asked Jonah if he had any right to be angry. In asking the question, God was stating His displeasure with Jonah's attitude. In order to illustrate the childish behavior of Jonah, God caused a gourd to grow up in order to give him shade. Once Jonah enjoyed the shade of the gourd, God caused a worm to smite the gourd. Then Jonah again wished to die. He had not created the gourd, but was displeased when it was taken away. Jonah's anger was based on his inability to separate the sinner from the sin. He should have been angry with the sin of the Assyrians, not the Assyrians themselves. In the illustration, the gourd was not the problem, but the worm. The Assyrians were people God wanted to repent. They too were people He wanted to bring into eternity. It was their sin that brought moral decay to their society. God hated the sin, but loved the sinners.

GOD'S WORLD MISSION

4:10,11 God wanted Jonah to see himself in the destruction of the gourd. He was more concerned over the withering of the gourd than over the sinful state of the thousands of people in the city of Nineveh. ***Should I not spare Nineveh:*** The question of verse 11 is not answered by God. He expects Jonah to answer the question, and thus give the correct answer. Would God be just in condemning a nation to destruction that would repent upon the preaching of His word? The answer would certainly be that He would not be a just God. On the other hand, Jonah's homeland must face destruction because they had the blessing of the preaching of the prophets, but they did not repent. God would not have been a just God to allow them to go without punishment in their unrepentant state of sin. God is not willing that any should perish (See comments 2 Pt 3:9). However, in order for Him to stand as a just God, He must exercise judgment over the disobedient.

Micah

WRITER

Micah is given credit for writing this book (1:1). This is not the Micah of 1 Kings 22:8, but the Micah from the farming village of Moresheth Gath, about thirty kilometers from Jerusalem. The name Micah means "who is like the Lord." We know nothing about Micah other than what is mentioned in this book. He was mentioned by Jeremiah (Jr 26:18; see Mc 3:12). Other prophets also validated the authorship of Micah by quoting from his writings (See Is 41:15; Ez 22:25; Zp 3:19; compare Mc 4:1-4 and Is 2:2-4).

Micah was a country prophet. At the time of his ministry, there was great oppression of the poor by the rich. Micah prophesied against the rich who were taking advantage of the poor for their own benefit. In dealing with the sins of a morally unjust society, he validated his message to be coming from the power of the Spirit of God (3:8). He was thus very confident and straightforward in his stern message to those who perpetuated the evil injustices of society. Micah was a fearless preacher of the will of God.

At the time of his ministry, Isaiah was preaching to the aristocrats in the city of Jerusalem. Micah was the country preacher to the southern kingdom, and thus remained in the rural areas. He prophesied against the northern kingdom until its fall in 722/21 B.C. He then focused on the social evils of Jerusalem, for the unrighteous rulers and religious leaders of the city were leading Judah in the same direction of destruction as their northern sister. This would again be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

DATE

Micah prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, who were kings of the southern kingdom. He began his ministry before the fall of the northern kingdom in 722/21 B.C. He continued his prophecy into the reign of Hezekiah (Jr 26:18). The book was probably written sometime between 735 and 700 B.C.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Micah was called into the prophetic ministry at a time when the northern kingdom of Israel was coming to an end. The Assyrian Empire had grown strong, and was thus to be God's proxy judge of the northern kingdom. In 734-732 B.C., Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, led a military campaign against the Syrians, Philistia and regions of Israel and Judah. As a result, in 734 B.C. the Syrians formed an alliance with the northern kingdom in order to overthrow Ahaz who was the king of Judah. Ahaz would not join with the alliance with the Syrians against Assyria, and thus there was an effort to bring Judah into subjection in defense against the Assyrians to the north. The Assyrians had already conquered Galilee and Gilead, and had their sights set on Samaria and Jerusalem. In 722/21 B.C. they were eventually successful in their conquest of the northern kingdom, and thus Israel was taken into captivity. At the same time, Judah was placed under heavy tribute that was to be paid to Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. In 711 B.C. King Yaman of Ashdod, with Judah, Moab and Edom, rebelled against the Assyrian oppression and looked to Egypt for help. Egypt did not help, and thus King Sargon of Assyria put down the rebellion, though Jerusalem was spared. In 701 B.C. Hezekiah of Judah rebelled against paying tribute to Assyria. As a consequence, Sennacherib, who was then king of Assyria, subjugated the countryside of Judah, but was not allowed by God to take Jerusalem (See 2 Kg 15:29 – 19:37; 2 Ch 28 – 32). With the death of 185,000 of his soldiers, Sennacherib returned to Assyria. However, Jerusalem remained in her sin, and thus Micah rose up to pronounce judgment against her by saying that she too would eventually go into captivity.

The Coming Judgment
(1:1 – 3:12)

Outline: (1) God's judgment (1:1-16), (2) Reason for judgment (2:1 – 3:12)

Chapter 1
GOD'S JUDGMENT

1:1-7 ***Word of the Lord:*** Because Micah knew that his message was from God, he was fearless in delivering it to the people. His confidence in the revelation from God gave him confidence to stand up against a sinful generation. He knew that his message was from God, and thus he did not turn from delivering to the people what they needed to know. ***Samaria and Jerusalem:*** Micah immediately identifies the focus of his prophetic message. His message was directed first to Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom. He then turned to address Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom. ***The Lord comes forth out of His place:*** The Bible does not teach that God is remote from His creation. He is transcendent. He intervenes in the affairs of man, first through the revelation of His will, and then, through His work among the nations. In the case of Israel, He intervened in the history of Israel in order to bring to pass the purpose for which He brought forth Israel as a nation. Since the day He brought Israel out of Egyptian captivity He was working to bring them to the fullness of times when the Christ, the Savior of the world would be born. Once this was accomplished, He would have fulfilled His promise to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3), and preserved the seed of woman until the crushing of the head of Satan (Gn 3:15). ***Rebellion ... sins of the house of Israel:*** The reason for this coming in judgment was because of the sin of both Israel and Judah. Both were losing their identity as the people of God, and thus God had to purify them through captivity in order to restore them to faith in Him. ***Samaria:*** This city would become a heap of stones in the field. Her walls would be torn down, exposing the foundation. The gold and silver of her idols would be beaten into pieces and taken back to Assyria as plunder. The treasures of her temple would be plunder for those who destroy her. ***Prostitutes:*** Because Samaria had given herself over to spiritual harlotry, the prosperity of her harlotry would be taken from her. Her wealth would be seized by the Assyrians (See 2 Kg 17:4-6). All of this transpired when Shalmane-

ser attacked the city in 722 B.C., which attack eventually led to the fall of the city to Sargon who replaced Shalmaneser as king of Assyria. Sargon then took 27,290 Jews into captivity and scattered them throughout his empire. He left the poor in the land, and then imported others from other areas of the Assyrian Empire to care for the land. Through intermarriage, he sought to destroy the identify of the Israelite race of people. Fortunately, God would never allow this to happen, for He would restore a remnant of Jews to the land in order to restore the identity of Israel.

1:8-16 ***Stripped and naked:*** In order to dramatize their sinfulness state and destitution that was to come upon Israel, Micah roams barefoot and dressed only in his loin cloth. ***Her wound is incurable:*** The culture of wickedness could not be healed. The northern kingdom was beyond repentance, and thus could not escape the judgment that was coming upon her. She had forsaken God, and thus God turned her over to the nations. ***Come to Judah:*** Not only did Micah mourn over the northern kingdom, but he also lamented over her sister to the south, Judah, who also was infected with the same wickedness. ***Gath:*** Micah used the meaning of several towns in the southern kingdom as puns to explain the calamity that was coming. In reference to Gath, the town where tales were told, there would be no one to speak a word. ***Beth Ophrah:*** In the house of dust, they were to roll in the dust. ***Saphir:*** In the beautiful city, they would walk in shame. ***Zaanan:*** In the town of marching, there would no longer be marching in pride. ***Beth Ezel:*** There would be no place for a foothold in the city on the hillside. ***Maroth:*** In the town of bitterness they would wait for something good. ***Calamity came:*** The Assyrians laid siege to Samaria. It fell in 721 B.C. Sennacherib then took the Assyrian army into Judah and thought to take those of Judah into captivity. Only by the grace of God Jerusalem was spared, though she eventually fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. ***Lachish:*** The town that was known for its horses was exhorted to harness her swiftest horses to the chariots, for war was coming. The idolatrous sins of the northern kingdom possibly began in Lachish, and then spread throughout the southern kingdom. Lachish would thus flee from existence. She should thus give her parting gifts to Micah's hometown, Moresheth in Gath. She should do so because in her time of calamity, she would need all the support possible from neighboring towns in order to defend herself against those who sought to destroy her. ***Adullam:*** David took refuge in a cave near this village when he was fleeing from Saul. Micah saw his people fleeing as David from those who would pursue them. ***Make yourself bald:*** It was a time for mourning, for the northern kingdom was in the twilight of their existence as an independent nation. Since Judah was following in the idolatrous sin of her northern sister, she too would eventually go into captivity. ***Children ... into exile:*** In 701 B.C. Sennacherib brought his army against Jerusalem. However, he was not able to take the city, for God sent His angel to kill 185,000 of his army. Through the repentance of Hezekiah, the city was spared (2 Kg 18:14-16; Is 37:36,37). However, the children of those who were spared would eventually go into captivity in the years to come. The parents handed their idolatrous and sinful behavior to their children, and eventually they went into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. because of their apostasy.

Chapter 2

REASON FOR JUDGMENT

2:1-5 They had developed a culture of moral corruption. Since God had given Israel the civil laws by which to deal in civil matters with one another, their violation of these civil laws meant that they were sinning against God. They were a society of many social injustices. Their greed had led them to create moral standards that set one person against another for the sake of gain. ***Evil on their beds:*** They would lie awake at night devising some plan to deal dishonestly with their neighbor. When they awoke in the mornings, they shamelessly carried out their sinful behavior with their fellow man. ***Covet fields:*** By bribing corrupt officials, they schemed to take the land possessions and houses of others. They plundered the land of others in order to increase their own heritage. In doing such, they created a class of poor who were exploited for the sake of sustaining the rich. ***Oppress a man:*** If Israel had remained a rural society as she was when she first possessed the land, then there would have been no class of poor people. Every person had his own land as a heritage to be given to his children. But as they forsook the law of God and became greedy, the greedy started, through injustice, to take possession of the land of others. The rich thus oppressed their fellow man. In doing so, the society developed a poor class that was oppressed by those who controlled all the wealth of the society (See Ps 36:1-4; Am 8:4; Mt 23:14; Mk 12:38-40). What led to the injustices of the society was a class of a wealthy few who controlled the wealth of the nation. The only way to correct this imbalance of wealth was through captivity. ***Against this family:*** God would bring calamity into the life of the rich family that gained its wealth through the oppression of others. ***Not remove your necks:*** They had removed their necks from the yoke of the commandments of God. But they would not be able to remove their necks from the yoke of their captors as they were taken into captivity. ***To the apostate He divided our fields:*** God would give the fields that the rich had acquired through oppression to the Assyrians who would be their captors. What the Assyrians did was to take the rich into captivity and leave the land in the hands of the poor. The restitution of the land to the poor was made possible by the captivity. When considering texts that deal with the exploitation of people in reference to the land, we must not forget that the year of Jubilee was being ignored. God created the law of Jubilee in order that all acquired land be restored after fifty years to the original owners who had received it as an inheritance from their forefathers (See comments Lv 25). But this law was ignored, and thus a class of poor people developed who had no land by which to feed their families. The restoration of all land during the year of Jubilee was being ignored by the rich land owners in violation to the commandments of God.

2:6-11 ***Do not prophesy:*** Micah had exposed the social crimes of the wealthy class. The rich were thus indignant to-

ward the message of his preaching. They tried to stop his speaking against their sins. As the preacher who preaches the truth of God, these hecklers sought to silence the voice of the prophet (See Is 30:10; Jr 5:30,31; Am 2:12; see comments 2 Tm 4:1-5; compare 2 Th 2:8-12). Micah presents four questions in order to reason with the people. ***Should this be said ...:*** In other words, should they be talking as they do. ***Is the Spirit ..."*** Do they think they can silence the Spirit of God by telling Micah to stop prophesying? They could not frustrate the work of God through the prophets, for they had to be rebuked for their sin in order that God stand just in His judgment that He was bringing upon them. ***Are these His deeds:*** They were God's actions taken because of their own sinful behavior. ***Do not my words ...:*** The upright need not fear anything from God. Only the wicked need to be afraid. ***Risen up as an enemy:*** They had become the enemy of God because their behavior worked against all that God had instructed. Instead of promoting righteousness before the nations, they had given themselves over to the idol worship and behavior of the nations. God could not, therefore, work His eternal plan to bring the Savior into the world through such an apostate society. ***You strip off the robe:*** They became a culture of crime, plundering innocent travelers as they passed through the land. Since judgment was coming on them because of their sinful behavior, their women and children would be taken from their homes by the invading Assyrians. The innocent would pay the price for their sins. ***Arise and depart:*** Micah exhorted them to depart from their wicked ways, for the land would have no rest if they continued in it as they were. ***Wine and of strong drink:*** The people did not want a preacher who would speak the truth concerning their wayward life. They wanted false prophets who would speak of peace and safety. The false prophets among them were telling the people that God would not allow His people to go into captivity. They were lying to the people by saying to the people that they were speaking the word of God (See Jr 5:18-21,23,31; 23:25-28,32; 29:8,9).

2:12,13 In these concluding words to the previous judgments of God, Micah revealed hope for the future. In this context, he looked to a time after their time in captivity. He saw their restoration to the land and restoration to fellowship with God. After scattering His people among the nations in order to cleanse them of their idolatrous behavior, God would bring them again into the land. They would be gathered into His fold for the coming Messianic age. ***All of you ... the remnant:*** This would not be a restoration of all the people of the captivity. Only a remnant of all twelve tribes would return in order to reestablish the identity of Israel in Palestine. ***The One who breaks open the way:*** Their King will break open the gate of bondage and lead the exiles to freedom. The historical reference to this event would be when Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire released the exiles to return to Palestine in 536 B.C. But we cannot escape the symbolism in reference to King Jesus leading His sheep from the nations into His fold, the spiritual Israel (See comments Rm 11:1-5). He would lead them out of bondage into the freedom that they would enjoy in Him (Gl 5:1).

Chapter 3
REASON FOR JUDGMENT

3:1-4 ***Heads of Jacob:*** The injustice of society continued as a result of the leadership of the people. Those who were to administer justice were corrupt (2 Kg 3:9-12; Jr 5:3-5). They were leaders who loved evil, but shunned good. When the leadership of a society leads in wickedness, then the society cannot be morally restored. In this case of fallen Israel, the leaders exploited the people for their own material advantage. Instead of being leaders who worked for the people, they saw the people as an opportunity for exploitation. In the time of calamity when these leaders cried out to the Lord for help, God would not listen to their pleas as they did not listen to the pleas of those they oppressed (See Pv 21:13; compare Is 1:12-15; Js 2:13). When the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom, they took the corrupt leaders into captivity and left the poor to care for the land. The land was restored to the original owners only when the oppressors were taken into captivity.

3:5-7 ***Who make My people stray:*** This would be the definition of the false prophet in the midst of a society that has departed from the word of God (See comments Hs 4:6). In view of the oppressing leadership that is explained in verses 1-4, these religious leaders condoned their wicked behavior in order to maintain their positions among the people (Compare Ez 13:19-23). Since Micah was speaking the truth, then these religious leaders were speaking lies in order to maintain their positions and pay (Is 3:12; compare Jr 9:16). In their greed to maintain their support, they sought to silence Micah and maintain their influence and financial support of the people. ***Seers will be ashamed:*** When the fulfillment of the prophecies of God's prophets comes true, then the false prophets will be ashamed of what they said to the people. Israel was doomed to destruction because the civil and religious leaders were corrupt. They used their positions as the opportunity to satisfy their greed.

3:8-12 ***Full of power by the Spirit:*** Because of the stern message of judgment that he had to declare to the people, Micah reaffirmed his inspiration for the message he delivered (See Ez 2:7,8; 2 Co 3:4-6). Micah stood against the unrighteous civil and religious leadership of his day who were oppressing the people through bribes and unjust exploitation of their lands and houses. ***Judge for a bribe:*** There was no justice because bribes had corrupted judgments. ***Teach for hire:*** The religious leadership taught for payment. They hijacked the spiritual requirements of the people in order to receive payment for what the people were required to do to fulfill their responsibilities toward God. Both priests and prophets were unscrupulous leaders who maintained their positions for the sake of money. ***Lean on the Lord:*** The religious leaders sought to validate their authority in religious matters by pretending that the Lord was among them. They lied to the people by asserting that the Lord had given them a message of peace and safety, when in reality, doom was in the near future. ***On account of you Zion will be plowed:*** The destruction of Israel had to be laid on the backs of the civil and religious leaders. When the people wanted to do that which was

right in their own eyes, the religious leaders followed along in order to maintain their salaries. They did not take a stand against the sin of the people. When a true prophet stands up among a people who have developed a culture of sin, and the prophet is accused of treason, then it can be determined that the people have gone beyond the point of repentance (See Jr 26:18). They will not listen to one they accuse of treason.

Hope For The Future
(4:1 – 5:15)

Outline: (1) The coming glory (4:1-8), (2) Birth for the future (4:9-13), (3) The coming Redeemer (5:1-15)

Chapter 4
THE COMING GLORY

4:1-5 See comments Is 2:1-5; Zc 8:20-23. In the midst of an evil day in which Micah prophesied, this message of hope is given for a new era of peace on earth. This Messianic hope that was given from the country preacher was also given to the people in Jerusalem by Isaiah. The prophecies are parallel, emphasizing the fact that the kingdom reign of the Messiah would bring peace among all those who obeyed the gospel (See comments Jr 31:31-34; Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). Reference was not to peace among those of the world, but peace among those who would submit to the kingdom reign of the coming Messiah.

4:6-8 ***In that day:*** That day would be when the prophecy of verses 1-5 would be fulfilled in Christ. The day would be marked by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (See comments Jl 2:28-32; At 2:16,17). It would be the day when the church was established by those who first obeyed the gospel on the Pentecost of A.D. 30 (See comments At 2). ***A strong nation:*** The church would be the strong nation of God's people on earth. The church would be the manifestation on earth of the Son of God's kingdom reign from heaven (See comments Dn 7:13,14; Mt 16:18,19; Ep 1:20-22). ***In Mount Zion:*** The church, the manifestation of the kingdom reign of the Son of God on earth, would be the new Jerusalem in which the King would reign in the hearts of the obedient (See comments Lk 17:20,21). ***The kingdom will come:*** When the first people obeyed the gospel in Acts 2, and thus allowed Jesus to reign in their hearts on earth as He reigned in heaven (Lk 17:20,21), then the reign of Jesus was manifested on earth (See comments Mt 6:9). The prophecy of this context was fulfilled in the present spiritual kingdom reign of Jesus, not a reestablishment of a physical kingdom after the manner by which the nation of Israel was established when God brought them out of Egyptian captivity. The purpose for the existence of Israel was to bring the Messiah into the world, and then offer Him for the salvation of all men (See comments Ep 3:8-12). When this was accomplished, Israel had fulfilled the need for her existence, and thus the Jews of physical Israel were assimilated into the spiritual Israel, the church, through their obedience to the gospel (See comments Gl 3:26-29).

BIRTH FOR THE FUTURE

4:9-13 It is unfortunate that many interpreters skip over centuries of God's work through the sacrificial Lamb and His bride, the church, in order to dream of some fanciful hope of a carnal worldly empire on earth wherein they can exercise authority over their fellow man. The beauty of this context is hope for Israel in their restoration from captivity, and the metaphorical use of that restoration in their redemption through the Savior that was to come. ***Woman in labor pains:*** Israel went through the labor pains of captivity into order to bring forth a new Israel that was cleansed of idolatry. When the Messiah came, a new birth would bring forth new creatures who would be in a new covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ (2 Co 5:17; see comments Jr 31:31-34). ***The Lord will redeem:*** The northern kingdom went into captivity in 722/21 B.C. The southern kingdom, Judah, went into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. When the Medo-Persian Empire came into existence by the defeat of the Babylonians in 539 B.C., Cyrus, their king, allowed the exiled Jews to return to their homeland in 536 B.C. God thus redeemed His people out of the land of their captors. It was a beautiful metaphor to symbolize the redemption of all men from their bondage in sin through the precious blood of Jesus (Ep 1:7). The church is now the family of the redeemed. The saints now reign in this present life with King Jesus who reigns over all things (Rm 5:17).

Chapter 5
THE COMING REDEEMER

5:1-6 ***He has laid siege against us:*** Israel would eventually be redeemed out of the nations to which they would be sent in captivity. Before the redemption, however, the people were exhorted to prepare for battle against the invading Assyrian army. ***Bethlehem Ephratah:*** Ephratah was the original older settlement that was eventually absorbed into the larger village of Bethlehem (Gn 35:19). Bethlehem was not a significant settlement in the region. It was the first home of David, who was Israel's greatest king (Ps 89:19-37). Those who were descendants of David were called Ephrathites (1 Sm 17:12; Rt 1:2). The literal fulfillment of this prophecy was in reference to the birth of the Messiah (See Mt 2:4-6; compare Is 7:14; 9:6,7). The Messiah would come forth from Bethlehem and rule over the people. ***Until the time when she who labors:*** The One who would rule would give the people of God, the Israelites, over to the hands of the nations. In the travail of their captivity, Israel would eventually give birth to the incarnate Son of God, the One who had given the rebellious Israelites over to the nations. ***The remnant:*** The emphasis in the context is on the One who is brought forth in Bethlehem. His coming would result in the birth of the church of the Christ, and thus the spiritual remnant that would be born out of physical Israel. In this case, it would be the spiritual remnant that would be brought forth out of the physical remnant that returned from captivity. Once the Jewish spiritual remnant, the church, was brought forth in Acts 2, then the church would go forth to the Gentiles (See comments Lk 24:46,47). The church would first begin with the Jews, and then go forth into all the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16; Rm 1:16). ***Reach to the ends of***

the earth: The word of the Christ would go beyond national Israel. His kingship would extend through all the world. As the Christ reigned in the hearts of men (Lk 17:20,21), His kingship would be worldwide (See comments Ph 2:5-11). As His word went forth into all the world, those of faith in all the world would submit to His kingship. ***This One will be the peace:*** See Lk 2:14 (Lk 10:36; Rm 5:1; 14:17; Ph 4:7). Peace would prevail among those who give their hearts to the King. The identity of the true spiritual Israel of God, the church, is determined by the peace that prevails among those who have given their hearts to King Jesus (See Jn 14:27). ***When the Assyrian comes:*** The literal invasion of Assyria into the land is here used as a historical metaphor to manifest the resistance of any invasion into the church of God's people. ***Seven:*** As the number "seven" stands for perfect or complete, so the resistance against the invasion of the enemy into the camp of God's people is perfect. ***Rule the land of Assyria:*** The literal fulfillment of this statement took place in 612 B.C. when the Babylonian Empire conquered Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. In this sense the Israelites were delivered from those who took them into captivity. This deliverance established a metaphorical reference to the deliverance of all of God's people from all captors. Instead of the physical army of Assyria coming into Palestine to take captive the people as in the Assyrian conquest of 722/21 B.C., and then being delivered by the Babylonians, the King, through the church, would go into the land of Assyria and convert the Assyrians. The people of the King would be spiritually delivered by their faith and obedience to the King.

5:7-9 ***Remnant of Jacob:*** In the initial fulfillment, reference was to the remnant of all twelve tribes that would return from captivity. In the spiritual fulfillment, the remnant would be those of all the nations who would come out of the captivity of sin, and thus be the light of God to the world. ***Dew from the Lord:*** God's people are the preserving salt of the world (Mt 5:13). ***Your hand will be lifted up:*** To King Jesus would be given sovereignty over all things (See comments Dn 2:44; 7:13,14; Ph 2:5-11). He would be made head over all things for the sake of the church (See comments Ep 1:20-22). Regardless of what happens in the world, those who are of Jesus' flock can be assured that Jesus is in control of all things (Hb 1:3). Though the world may seem to be out of control, the disciples of Jesus can be assured that God is working all things together for their good (Rm 8:28). Through Israel God was working all things for the salvation of all men. Israel was the means through which God brought the Savior of the world into the world. He worked through the prophets, therefore, in order to preserve Israel for the salvation of all nations.

5:10-15 The picture that is painted by these verses is that God would be working among the captives in order to eradicate from them that which led to their captivity. Their senseless wandering after things of their own imagination would be terminated. They would be restored to the word of God, and thus willingly put away all idol gods that they had created after their own imagination and all spiritualistic worship practices. They would no longer look within themselves in order to find a god or a spirit. They would look to the one true and living God, and the Holy Spirit that He would send forth into the world. Their captivity would cause a paradigm shift in their culture. All those things in which they trusted in order to exist as a physical nation, and their religious imaginations, would be taken away. They would be restored to faith in God as their king, and thus the One in whom they would hope. Their security, therefore, would no longer be in the things that they would either construct or imagine, but in God who would reign from heaven in their hearts.

God's Complaint Against His People (6:1 – 7:20)

Outline: (1) God's appeal (6:1-8), (2) Condemnation of evil (6:9-16), (3) Lament for the nation (7:1-7), (4) Faith in God (7:8-13), (5) Prayer for the people (7:14-20)

Chapter 6

GOD'S APPEAL

6:1-5 In verses 1-5 Micah reveals God's accusation against His people. God asks for his people to enter into a legal debate with Him concerning His treatment of them throughout their history. He asks them these questions in order to bring to their attention that they have no excuse for their behavior. ***Mountains:*** The leaders of the nations are called upon to hear the complaint that God has against His people. ***Have I wearied you:*** God did not give them any commandments that were a burden to them (Compare Jr 2:5-8; 1 Jn 5:3). In this brief historical review of God's care over His people, He reviewed that His transcendent work in their history was for their good. In fact, without His involvement in their history, they would not exist as a nation. He had counselled them for good, while Balaam counselled them for evil and destruction (Nm 22–24). ***Gilgal:*** See Nm 22 – 27; Ja 1 – 4.

6:6-8 Micah answered the Lord for the people. His answer reveals what God requires in order to live righteously. God does not seek ceremonial worship from those who would seek His favor. Countless ceremonial sacrifices will not forgive sins, neither will the ceremonies produce a spiritual life. There is no offering that a man can give that will atone for any sin. What God requires comes from the heart (See Dt 10:12,13; 30:11-14). ***Do justly ... love mercy ... walk humbly with your God:*** That which is good does not come from outward performances of law. In one's relationship with his fellow man, he is required to be just (Pv 21:3; Am 5:23,24; Zc 8:16) and have mercy (Js 2:13). Walking humbly with God involves being led by the will of God, not one's own inventions of religiosity (See comments Rm 3:31; compare Mt 23:23; Lk 11:42; Js 1:27). Heartless obedience to ceremonial law is rejected by God (See comments Am 5).

CONDEMNATION OF EVIL

6:9-12 ***Cries out to the city:*** God makes His final plea to the city of Jerusalem. The plea is to fear His name, and thus obey His will. God was going to bring the rod of discipline on the city in order to encourage repentance. God addressed the

misguided religiosity of the leaders and the injustices that prevailed throughout society. The city had become a gathering of the wicked who dwelt throughout the city. Once the city was vile with sin, then it spread throughout the country. The city of Jerusalem, therefore, was leading in the moral downfall of the nation. ***Treasures of wickedness:*** The rich had gained their wealth through their exploitation of the poor. ***Wicked balances:*** Through crooked business practices they had become wealthy. As long as such practices continued to be the principle by which they dealt with one another, they could not continue as a society that would represent God (See Dt 25:13; Pv 11:1; 16:11; Am 8:5). ***Violence ... lies ... deceitful:*** The city of Jerusalem was a spiritually sick society. When cities become as this, God gives them over to their own destruction as He gave over Sodom and Gomorrah (See comments Rm 1:18-32).

6:13-16 The unjust would reap what they had sown. Their prosperity would be turned into poverty. Their lavish way of life would be turned into a life of affliction. They would not be able to enjoy that which they gained through unjust business practices and exploitation. It would be taken from them by their captors. ***Omri:*** They had followed after the wicked leadership of King Omri, and his son, Ahab, who exploited others for their own benefit (See 1 Kg 16–22). ***Reproach of My people:*** God had established Israel as a nation that would bring glory to His name (See Dt 28:1-14). However, they rejected His leadership through His word, and thus created an unjust society that was scorned by the surrounding nations. They had the privilege of being given the oracles of God, and being led by God throughout their history. They thus had no excuse for their behavior. Their privilege of being God's people also brought upon them the burden of reaping His judgment.

Chapter 7

LAMENT FOR THE NATION

7:1-7 ***No cluster to eat:*** Micah had poured his heart out to the people, seeking for signs of repentance. He was as a farmer who went to the field seeking fruit from his labors. But he found none. The nation was morally barren and unwilling to repent. He could find no good man in Judah. It was a culture of wickedness, and thus beyond repentance. Their leaders led for their own gain. They maintained their positions for the sake of wealth. Even the best of their leaders was as a thorn bush. Justice no longer existed in the courts for decisions were made on the basis of how much the judge could be bribed. And since the rich had the money to pay the bribes, judgments were made in favor of the rich. It was a nation in which the rule of law had failed, and thus the society was in disintegration (See Ps 37:35-38; Pv 14:24; Is 5:15; Jr 17:10,11). ***Daughter rises up against her mother:*** Jesus quoted verse 6 in reference to the response to His teaching of the generation in which He lived (See Mt 10:34-36; Lk 12:51-53). The teaching of the truth generated antagonism against the one who preached the truth. It caused animosity within families. Those in Micah's generation rose up against the prophets of God, as Jesus' generation of religious leaders rose up against him. Regardless of the opposition, however, Micah made a commitment to trust in the Lord.

FAITH IN GOD

7:8-13 ***Light to me:*** Regardless of the persecution that would come on Micah because he preached the message of God, he trusted in God's protection (Compare Mk 6:48; At 12:5-10; 23:11). God watches over those who are His (Rm 8:28; 1 Co 10:13). ***My enemy will see:*** Micah placed himself in place of the people. Though for a time God would discipline His people through captivity, He would restore them to their land. He would bring them from their lands of captivity and plant them again in the land that He had given to them as an inheritance. In their restoration to the land, therefore, the enemies who previously mocked Israel would be shamed. They would be shamed because their nations would have gone out of existence, but Israel as a race was restored to the land. ***The land will be desolate:*** Until the time of the restoration, God's people had to be disciplined with captivity. The land would be forsaken because the generation that was taken into captivity had to bear the fruit of their sins (Gl 6:7). Only their descendants would be restored to the land.

PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE

7:14-20 Carmel was a land of great vineyards, and Bashan and Gilead great pasture lands. As a farmer, Micah used the metaphors of the regions to portray God's care over His flock. ***Marvelous things:*** God had protected His people through great miraculous wonders when they came out of Egyptian captivity. He would show wonders of protection when He brought them back from their captivity. Verse 15 could look toward the introduction of the Messianic era (Compare Mt 4:23-25). God introduced the Messianic age with miraculous wonders that drew the people to Jesus (See comments Mk 16:15-20). ***Who is a God like unto you:*** See Ex 15:11; Ps 89:6; Is 40:18-25; 46:5. In the context here, reference is to the unlimited grace that proceeds from God on behalf of His people. There is no limit to the grace of God. When men's mercy runs out, God continues to have mercy because of His boundless grace. ***True to Jacob:*** Israel was sent into captivity because of her spiritual harlotry with idol gods. She forsook God, but God showed mercy when she repented. He brought them back from their captivity in order to manifest His great mercy and forgiveness. God's restoration of His people from captivity illustrated His redemption of all people who would come to Him through Jesus. Though lost in the mire of sin, the Son of God was incarnate into the world in order to die for sinners. He did not come because we were righteous, but because we were helpless in our sin (See comments Rm 8). His coming was for the purpose of making us righteous before God. This is the good news of the incarnation, atoning cross, resurrection, ascension, and present kingdom reign as our king and high priest. Unless one makes a living statement of declaration that Jesus is the Christ and incarnation Son of God, he or she does not have the opportunity to reap the blessings of His coming (Rm 6:1-6).

Nahum

WRITER

Nahum, the Elkoshite, was the writer of this book. What is known about Nahum is found only in this book. His name means "full of comfort." He was from Elhush, the location of which is not known. Some have suggested that Elhush was a village about five kilometers south of Nineveh. Others have stated that this was a small village in Galilee, or possibly a village that was located somewhere in the southwestern region of Judea.

The contemporary prophets of Nahum were Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Huldah and Josiah of Judah.

DATE

Led by Nebopolassar, a coalition of the Medes, Babylonians and Scythians conquered the city of Nineveh in 612 B.C. Some of the Assyrian leaders and army fled to Carchemish where they called on Egypt to join them in an alliance against the Babylonians. The Egyptians subsequently responded to the plea of the Assyrians. However, at the battle of Carchemish, the Assyrian/Egyptian alliance was defeated by the Medes and Babylonians under the commandment of Nebopolassar, thus ending the reign of terror by the Assyrians. Concerning the date of writing, Nahum mentions the destruction of Thebes in Egypt, which took place in 663 B.C. The city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, was conquered in 612 B.C. Nahum, therefore, prophesied after the conquest of Thebes in 663 B.C. and prior to the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C.

BOOK

The book of Nahum is unique from the other books of the prophets. Within the book there is no prophecy against the people of God. The message of Nahum was exclusively directed toward Nineveh. In the message, there is no call for Nineveh to repent. The focus of the message is directed on the judgment of Nineveh. The city had already been judged by the spoken word of Nahum, and thus the book was written as a proclamation of doom of the coming destruction of Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire that it represented.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 663 B.C., the battle of Thebes in Egypt was decisive. The victory of Assyria in this battle affirmed the Assyrians as the dominant kingdom of the ancient Near East world. Nimrod, or Nineveh, as an ancient city, was founded by Nimrod (Gn 10:8-11). Situated on the east bank of the Tigris River, Nineveh became the capital of the Assyrian Empire. It was the capital of the Empire in 612 B.C. when it fell to the Babylonians.

The Assyrian Empire was an empire of fierce warriors. The principal god of the Assyrians was Asshur. Asshur was considered a cruel god who sanctioned the destruction of other kingdoms through rape, plunder and destruction. The Assyrian army was considered one of the most ferocious armies of the ancient world, being born out of a civilization that sought the destruction of other kingdoms as the empire expanded throughout the ancient world.

The Ninevites thought that their capital could not be conquered. The metropolitan area of Nineveh was at least 75 kilometers in circumference. The administrative area of the city was about ten kilometers in circumference. The administrative area was surrounded by a great wall with about 1,500 towers.

The Assyrians were used as God's proxy judgment against the northern kingdom of Israel. Tiglath-pileser I (745-727 B.C.) was the first Assyrian king to invade the northern kingdom of Israel. He was the first to take Israelites into captivity. Archaeological discoveries of Assyrian texts confirm his initial campaign into Palestine. This campaign was followed by King Shalmaneser IV (727-722 B.C.) who began a siege against Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom. In 721 B.C. Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) took Samaria and carried the Israelites into captivity. At the same time, he imported people from other nations into Palestine in order to destroy the identity of Israel. Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) of Assyria later conquered the rural territory of the southern kingdom, Judah. He intended to take the city of Jerusalem, but was stopped by God with the death of 185,000 of his soldiers outside the walls of Jerusalem (2 Kg 18:13 – 19:37). Sennacherib was followed to the throne of the Assyrian Empire by Esarhaddon (681-625 B.C.). It is believed that Esarhaddon was reigning as king of Assyria when Nahum prophesied against the city of Nineveh. His prophecies came true in 612 B.C. when the Babylonians conquered Nineveh.

There have been several great archaeological discoveries of the city of Nineveh. It has probably been one of the most excavated cities of the ancient world. Portions of the royal palace of Nineveh have been excavated. Sculptured reliefs that depict Sennacherib's campaigns, specifically his defeat of Lachish in 701 B.C. (2 Kg 18:14,17), line the walls of the royal palace. It has been discovered that there were numerous parks and water

gardens in the city (See 2:8). Sennacherib left a written account of his campaign into Judah in 701 B.C. and his effort to take Jerusalem (See 2 Kg 18:13 – 19:36). His records mention King Hezekiah. Other archaeological discoveries mention Manasseh, king of Judah, who supplied building materials for Esarhaddon's royal palace in Nineveh. One of the greatest discoveries was the library of Ashurbanipal that contained over 1,500 different texts concerning Assyrian history and life (See *Encyclopedic Bible Study Guide*, History of the Bible, Archaeology and the Bible, "The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III," "The Annals of Sargon II," "Hezekiah's Tunnel," "Sennacherib's Prism"). All these archaeological discoveries confirm the fact that the Bible is historically accurate.

Judgment Poured Out On Nineveh
(1:1 – 3:19)

Outline: (1) Nineveh's destruction (1:1-15), (2) Nineveh's judgment (2:1-13), (3) Vindication of God's judgment (3:1-19)

Chapter 1
NINEVEH'S DESTRUCTION

1:1-6 ***Burden:*** This word can be translated "oracle." It was a word that was used by the prophets to denote a message from God to the people. In this case, it was a message of doom delivered to Nineveh. ***Vision:*** In order to validate the message, Nahum here affirmed that the message was from God, for the term "vision" was used in reference to the means by which the message came to God's prophets. ***God is jealous:*** God does not wish to compete with the imaginations of His creation who seek to create gods after their own imaginations in order to do according to their own desires. If one would seek to please God, he must know God and His revelation to man. Therefore, the only access to know the one true and living God is His written revelation. Any who would seek to understand God apart from the revelation of His word are creating a god in their minds after their own imaginations. ***Vengeance on His adversaries:*** In this case, the adversary was the Assyrian Empire. God had used the Assyrians to discipline the northern kingdom of Israel for their apostasy. However, the Assyrians saw their conquest of Israel simply as an effort against another people in order to destroy it. They thus worked against God's plan through Israel to bring the Savior into the world through the seedline of Abraham. Though God allowed the Assyrian conquest of Israel, judgment was to come upon them because of their savage treatment of His people and their efforts to destroy the identity of Israel. ***Slow to anger:*** God is patient in order to bring about His eternal plan. ***Great in power:*** When God is stirred, He changes history in order to bring to pass His eternal plan. He does such by working in the affairs of the nations. When nations go wrong, He is not idle in bringing about their demise for the sake of His people. Regardless of the schemes of man, or the power of the nations, God will have His way in the affairs of the world that He created (See Rm 2:3-5). He works in the affairs of men with the power to affect the rise and fall of empires. ***The mountains quake:*** God is the master of His creation. And since man is a part of His creation, He is the master of the affairs of man. Once God has determined to pour out His judgment upon those who become enemies of His purposes, then His enemies must suffer the consequences of His judgment.

1:7,8 The fierceness of God that was described in the previous verses would bring comfort to the people of God. Since God is in control of all things, then He is in control of the affairs of those who would persecute His people. Therefore, God is a stronghold for the righteous (See comments Rm 8:28). He is the One to whom the righteous go to take refuge from the trials of life. ***He knows those who trust in Him:*** When one feels forgotten by God in times of trial and persecution, he should remember that God has not forgotten him. God knows those who trust in Him because they are the ones who have determined to walk by faith and the direction of His word (See comments Rm 3:28). ***Overflowing flood:*** Reference could be to the overwhelming death of Sennacherib's army when he surrounded Jerusalem and sought to conquer the city. The death of 185,000 of his soldiers terminated his plans (2:5-7; Is 37:33,34). However, reference is probably to the overflowing of armies that were led by the Babylonians that brought an end to Nineveh in 612 B.C. ***End of its place:*** Reference here is to Nineveh. Nineveh represented a great empire of fierce warriors who dealt cruelly with everyone they conquered. The Israelites were a small kingdom of people who had no chance of survival against such a kingdom. Nevertheless, when God works for His people, there is no power on earth that can overcome His purposes. The enemies of God can find no hiding place from His vengeance.

1:9-11 The message of these verses is directed specifically to the Ninevites. ***What do you imagine:*** This is a statement of the prophet's derision against the Ninevites who thought to work against the plans of God. In this case, Nahum mocked them for thinking that they could do anything to change their destiny of doom. ***Second time:*** God's judgment of Nineveh would be so complete that there would be no need for a second outpouring of judgment. ***Drunken as drunkards:*** The Ninevites may have thought that they were secure behind the defenses of their walls and towers, and thus carried on with a senseless regard for impending danger. ***Devoured as dry stubble:*** Regardless of their strength as a great warrior nation, God would bring them down quickly as dry stubble is quickly burned by fire. ***There is one who comes:*** This is probably a reference to Sennacherib who thought to conquer Jerusalem. No greater illustration could be used for the downfall of Nineveh. When Sennacherib sought to destroy Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah, God's conquest of the Assyrian army was overwhelming. God brought down 185,000 Assyrians in one night of death (2 Kg 18). This doom of the Assyrian army illustrated the doom that was coming upon the Assyrians once again.

1:12,13 These were words of comfort to those who were

oppressed by their fear of the Assyrians. When God passes through the camp of the enemy, He brings them down (2 Kg 18:29-35). Though the Israelites would be taken into captivity, God would eventually break the yoke of bondage of their captors.

1:14,15 ***No longer be remembered:*** Verse 14 was God's direct message to the Ninevites. Though Nineveh was great, it would be brought to a total end. The city would be destroyed to the point that centuries would pass before men discovered its ancient ruins. ***Good news:*** There was certainly good news that was proclaimed after the death of the army of Sennacherib who sought to destroy Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign (2 Kg 18). However, reference here was to the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. It was the seat of the terror of the world, and thus the world rejoiced over its fall. The Assyrians would no longer pass through the people of God wreaking havoc. Assyria would no longer be a threat to other nations of the world.

Chapter 2
NINEVEH'S JUDGMENT

2:1,2 The city of Nineveh fell through the leadership of Nebopolassar who led a coalition of armies of the Medes, Babylonians and Scythians against the city. The Babylonian Tablet briefly states the fall of the city, which fall took place in 612 B.C. In the brief statement of the Babylonian Tablet it is stated that the city fell in two and a half months (June to the middle of August). It has been speculated that a great rain occurred in the previous two months. The Tigris River rose so much that it washed away a large portion of the wall of the city (see 1:8), thus making it possible for Nebopolassar to take the city. In this prophecy Nahum pictures the city as fallen because God was working to restore His people to honor among the nations. Though the restoration of Israel did not take place until 586 B.C. when the Medo-Persians overthrew the Babylonians, the fall of Nineveh was the beginning of the end of the captivity of Israel.

2:3,4 The picture here of the invaders of Nineveh is of a terrifying attack against the cruel Assyrians. They would reap what they had sown throughout their history of international terror. The attackers were dressed in scarlet, brandishing their polished swords, and having shields that were dyed red. Chariots ran through the streets of the city causing destruction and slaughter.

2:5-7 Nineveh was first attacked in its suburbs, and then the troops of the Medo/Babylonian army was set against the walls of the administrative capital. Battering rams were prepared and set against the walls. The waterworks of the city were diverted in order to make possible an approach to the walls. It is not known if natural floods made a breach in the walls, or the watercourse through the city was changed in order to run against the foundations of the walls. Whatever the case, the flow of waters undermined the foundations of the walls, and a breach was made for attack. ***Beating their breasts:*** All the horrors that the Assyrians had heaped upon other people had come upon them. Their sense of security that they had placed in the fortifications of the city was gone when the walls of the city were breached.

2:8-10 ***Flee away:*** Though their commanders would cry out to take a stand against the invaders, no soldier would even look back as he fled from the downfall. When Nineveh fell, a remnant of the Assyrian forces fled to Carchemish. It was there in 609 B.C. that the Babylonians made a final assault against an Assyrian/Egyptian coalition. The end of the Assyrian Empire came when this coalition was defeated. ***Spoil:*** All of Nineveh's great treasures were taken. That which she had taken from all the nations she had defeated was taken from her as plunder.

2:11-13 Desolation and destruction will overtake the Assyrians. With the fall of the great leaders (lions), all the people would grow pale in defeat. The Assyrian army had brought captives to its people in order that they feed upon the oppressed captives. But now the great Assyrian army is destroyed, and thus the whelps were scattered. The lion army of the Assyrians was cut off, and the Empire fell.

Chapter 3
VINDICATION OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

3:1-4 This chapter explains why the Assyrian Empire had to fall. Nineveh represented an evil empire, and thus God could not allow her to continue as an empire among the nations. Assyria was an empire whose goal was to plunder other nations. It was thus an empire of destruction that influenced the world through its wickedness. The Assyrians were a culture that could not dwell among the nations. The discovery of the chronicles of Ashurbanipal II (885-860 B.C.) reveals the cruelty with which the Assyrian leaders dealt with their conquered enemies. Ashurbanipal skinned some of the leaders and covered pillars and walls with the skins. He impaled some on pointed poles to be displayed before the people. The Assyrians were a cruel culture of barbarians that God could no longer allow to exist. Nineveh was truly a city that was built on the blood of conquered nations. She was as a well-favored harlot who enticed other nations to ruin with her promises and charms of seduction. The nation was a culture that thrived on the conquest of other nations, and thus could never peacefully coexist with other nations of the world.

3:5-7 Nineveh, as a charming harlot, would be embarrassed before the world. She would be shamed before all for her seductive manner by which she lured the nations of the world into her control. Nineveh had played the harlot before the nations, and thus she must suffer the shame of a harlot (See Ez 16:37-39; Hs 2:3). Because of what she had done to the nations, no one would feel sorrow for her when she fell. No nation would be found who would grieve over her downfall.

3:8-11 ***No Amon:*** Ashurbanipal had conquered the great populous city of No Amon (Thebes, the Egyptian capital). ***The sea:*** Reference is to the Nile River that was the means by which the Egyptians existed. But as the Nile did not lead to the salvation of Egypt from the Assyrians, so the Tigris River would not aid in the salvation of Nineveh. In fact, it would be the waters of the Tigris that would be used to bring down Nineveh (vss 7,8). Though Thebes was a great city that was brought down by Ashurbanipal, God would bring down Nineveh. As Ashurbanipal took great plunder from Thebes,

so great plunder would be taken from Nineveh. All the treasures of Thebes, therefore, eventually ended up in the hands of the Babylonians when they conquered Nineveh in 612 B.C. There irony in history when Nineveh fell in 612 B.C. At the time, some of the Assyrian army fled to Carchemish. These refugees then sent to Egypt in order to establish an alliance with the Egyptians against the Babylonians in a last-stand encounter at Carchemish. However, in 609 B.C. the Babylonians dealt a crushing blow to the Assyrian/Egyptian force at the battle of Carchemish. Those in whom the Assyrians took so much pride in conquering, the Egyptians, could not in their last hour help save them from the judgment of God that came through the Babylonian army.

3:12-17 ***All your strongholds:*** All the outlaying fortresses of Nineveh first fell to the invaders. They fell with little resistance. Women: Once the strongholds fell without much resistance, the inhabitants of Nineveh were stricken with terror as helpless women. ***Fortify:*** They must make every effort to fortify themselves against the invading Babylonians. However, their efforts would be futile. Regardless of how strong they made the defenses of the city, the city would fall. Once God mandated the fall of the city, no human fortification could stop its fall. And though they increased their army as locusts, no great number of soldiers could stand against an army that was used by God to bring down a civilization. ***They flee away:*** The remnants of the nobles of Nineveh fled to Carchemish, but they were pursued and overcome by the Babylonians.

3:18,19 When Nineveh fell, the rest of the nations rejoiced. Those the Assyrians had afflicted throughout their history rejoiced over the calamity that came upon them. Nahum prophesied that the nation would cease as an empire, never to rise again. As a nation, it reaped what it had sown among the nations. Nineveh was destroyed never to rise again. The empire vanished from history, never more to terrorize the nations of the world. God's judgment on the Ninevites had been fulfilled. His judgment on this nation reaffirms the truth that God does work among the nations in order to bring them to account for their sin.

Habakkuk

WRITER

Habakkuk was a prophet of Judah. His name means "love's embrace" or "he who embraces." We are told nothing concerning his life. From the statement made in 3:19, we might conclude that Habakkuk was a Levite of the temple in Jerusalem who was involved in the instruments that were played during the sacrifices. Some have suggested that he was the son of the Shunammite woman whom Elisha restored to life (2 Kg 4:16-37). Though there are many suggestions concerning the identity of this prophet, there is no clear statement of his identity outside what is revealed in this book. Nevertheless, since Israel accept this book as inspired prophecy, so do we.

DATE

The ministry of Habakkuk took place during the reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim (612–605 B.C.). He was contemporary with Jeremiah, Huldah and Zephaniah. Determining the date of the book depends a great deal on who the "wicked" are of 1:4. Since there is no historical clue within the book concerning the date of writing, then we are left to our deductions concerning the date. We would conclude that the northern kingdom had already gone into Assyrian captivity, and thus Judah, the southern kingdom, was under the threat of same judgment. If this is the case, then the "wicked" of 1:4 would refer to the Babylonians and their oppression of Judah and Jerusalem, which oppression eventually led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. And since 1:6 states that God would raise up the Chaldeans (the Babylonians), it seems that Habakkuk's ministry took place prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. If so, he was one of the last prophets to the independent nation of Israel.

BOOK

God's prophets usually delivered the message of God to His people. However, Habakkuk was given a message that he was to deliver to God Himself. Habakkuk assumed the position of the people in offering a complaint to God concerning the suffering of man. Habakkuk approached God with the complaint as to why the peoples' prayers were going unanswered. They were suffering and needed relief from the wicked. He also questioned why God would use the unbelieving Babylonians to bring judgment on His people. In reference to the suffering of His people, Habakkuk questioned the work of God through unbelieving nations. He wondered how a just God could use unbelievers to discipline His people. He questioned why the righteous have to suffer so much at the hands of the unrighteous who prosper in their oppression of the righteous. As with Job's complaint concerning the same matter, God gave no answer. At the end of the book, Habakkuk, as well as Job, simply had to trust in God that He had all things under control.

Throughout the book, Habakkuk questions God for answers concerning the suffering of man. If God is all good and benevolent, then he wondered why He would allow His people to suffer. If He is all-powerful (omnipotent), he wondered why He did not take the suffering

away. In the case of Judah, God allowed the suffering to come through the Babylonians. Habakkuk is thus inspired by the Holy Spirit to make these complaints in order that we better understand the work of God in relation to His creation, especially in relation to His people (See comments Jb). As with Job, his complaint was centered around why the righteous suffer.

The answer to Habakkuk's question was answered with history. Israel had lost their identity as God's people. They had turned to idolatry. God knew, and the repentant remnant that would come from captivity would find out, that the only way to cleanse the people of idolatry was captivity. Once the faithful journeyed through the darkness of captivity, repenting of their idolatry, then they would understand why they had to suffer the captivity of the unbelievers. Thus God did not give Habakkuk an immediate answer to his question, knowing that in time the people would understand that the captivity was necessary in order to reestablish the identity of Israel for the coming of the Messiah.

The historical background of the book lies in the fading effects of the reformation of the southern kingdom through the efforts of Josiah. Josiah had repented of the idol worship of Judah. However, the transformations that he initiated did not last. He tore down the idols, but the idolatry was still in the hearts of the people. After his death, his reforms were reversed and Judah continued in its digression into apostasy. Judah had followed the wayward path of her northern sister. God had allowed the Assyrians to conquer the northern kingdom of Israel, and at the time of Habakkuk's ministry, He brought the threat of the Babylonians to the door of the southern kingdom.

The northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. The Assyrian Empire fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Led by their King Nebopolassar, the Babylonians were expanding their empire to the west. In 609 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nebopolassar, finished the Assyrians at the battle of Carchemish. After the battle of Carchemish, the sons of Josiah, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, wickedly reigned, and thus continued the digression of Judah into apostasy. The social environment of Judah, specifically Jerusalem, was built on lawlessness. The poor were oppressed by the rich. There was strife and tyranny in the air, and the people lived in a morally degraded society that was patterned after the idol religiosity that they had created for themselves. It was a time that made Judah ripe for termination. The people were thus coming to the time when God would pour out judgment on them through the hands of unbelievers. It was a time when the righteous of Judah were suffering as a result of the turmoil of the nations, as well as being oppressed by the rich of their own people. They simply needed to be patient until God brought justice.

Complaints And Answers
(1:1 – 2:4)

Outline: (1) Habakkuk's complaint (1:1-4), (2) God's answer (1:5-11), (3) Habakkuk questions God's answer (1:12-17), (4) God's answer (2:1-4)

Chapter 1
HABAKKUK'S COMPLAINT

1:1-4 ***Burden:*** The burden, or "oracle," (Ob 1) that Habakkuk saw was not directed to the people of God, as was the traditional audience of the prophets. The burden was given to Habakkuk in order to offer a complaint to God concerning the suffering of His people that was brought on them by the unbelievers. We would conclude, therefore, that the message of God to Habakkuk was given for us in the sense that God wanted us to offer to Him the complaints that are revealed in this book. Since we would have these same complaints, then God inspired Habakkuk to approach Him with the complaints that we would have concerning suffering. What we must understand, however, is that the suffering that was brought on the people of God by the unbeliever in this historical setting of the book was caused by the apostasy of God's people. God was just, therefore, in that He had warned them that if they turned from Him, He would turn them over to the nations. Not only would God turn them over to the oppression of the nations, He would turn them over to themselves. Because they had rejected the moral and civil laws of God, the rich among them were oppressing the poor. Therefore, they had no justification for their complaints. ***How long:*** The Bible student must keep in mind that during this period of history, national independent Israel was in the twilight of its existence. God's people had turned to idolatry. They would not repent. It was time to take the remnant of the people in Palestine, Judah, out of the land in order to bring forth a repentant remnant that would eventually identify again the people of God. So in answer to Habakkuk's question of "how long," the answer would be until God had accomplished His purpose of purifying His people through captivity in order that the Messiah be brought into the world in fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). This purification of the people would take place only through captivity. ***The wicked:*** There are several possibilities as to who "the wicked" were in their oppression of the people of God. Since the Assyrians had conquered Samaria in 722/21 B.C., the reference could be to the Assyrians as they sought to expand their conquests into Judea. These aspirations were stymied when God caused the death of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers outside the walls of Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah. Another possibility in identifying the wicked would be taken from verse 6, a reference to the Chaldeans (the Babylonians). Since Habakkuk was contemporary with those prophets who were proclaiming that God's judgment was coming on the southern kingdom by the approaching Babylonians, we would assume that the Babylonians would be in the mind of the prophet. Jeremiah had identified the Babylonians

as the empire that would be God's proxy judge against Jerusalem. And since Habakkuk was contemporary with Jeremiah, we would conclude that the Babylonians were the oppressors of God's people at this time in history. We must also keep in mind that the Babylonians began to oppress the southern kingdom as early as 606 B.C. when the first captives of the southern kingdom were taken into Babylonian captivity. Daniel and Jehoiachin were taken in the 606 B.C. captivity. ***Wicked surround the righteous:*** In the context, Habakkuk spoke for the righteous few within Israel who had not given themselves over to idol worship and wicked living. Not only were the unbelievers oppressing God's people, but also the rich within the society of Israel. The righteous in this statement, therefore, would refer to those who were oppressed as citizens of national Judah, as well as being oppressed locally by the rich of the Judean society (See comments of Mc). We would conclude that Habakkuk was speaking primarily to those of his own people, for the wickedness was all around him. He lived in a morally degraded society. ***Justice goes forth perverted:*** Through bribery, the unrighteous twisted judgments for their own benefit.

GOD'S ANSWER

1:5-11 God told Habakkuk to look around at the nations. He reassured Habakkuk that He was working among the nations. He was in control, and thus international events among the nations were not out of control. ***Wonder and be astonished:*** Reference could either be to the Assyrians whom God brought down to Jerusalem during the reign of Sennacherib when 185,000 of his soldiers were killed by God in one night. Or, what could be in the mind of God was His judgment on His people through the proxy of the Babylonians whom He would raise up to terminate the southern kingdom of Israel. ***I am raising up:*** The Babylonians were at first subject to the Assyrians who were north of Babylon. Nabopolassar, the first king of the Babylonians, was subject to the Assyrians, while ruling over the Babylonians to the south of Nineveh. However, he formed an alliance with other peoples, specifically the Scythians to the north of Assyria, and then rose up in rebellion against the Assyrians. Nineveh fell in 612 B.C. as a result of this rebellion. Nebopolassar's son, Nebuchadnezzar, succeeded his father as king of the Babylonian Empire. It was during this time that Habakkuk voiced his complaints to God concerning the subjection of the people of God to the sufferings that came from the international turmoil of the time, for the Israelites in the land of Palestine passed from the oppression of the Assyrians to the oppression of the Babylonians. ***Justice ... proceed from themselves:*** The Babylonians became a law unto themselves, and thus determined their movements among the nations according to their own idol gods. Since they determined their laws for themselves, then such laws were in conflict with the laws of God. ***Leopards:*** They laid in wait to conquer. ***Wolves:*** They were fierce, and thus ravaged those they conquered. ***Eagle:*** They were eager to sweep down on their prey. ***East wind:*** As the hot east wind would dry up the moisture of the land, so the Babylonians would come from the east and dry up the land by taking the people of a land into captivity. ***Heap earthen mounds:*** They would build mounds against the cities they would conquer. No nation was able to stand against them. Since they were able to take the supposedly impregnable city of Nineveh which was one of the most fortified cities of the ancient world, then there would be no city that would be able to withstand their attack. ***Ascribing his power to his god:*** God would be using the Babylonians as a proxy to eventually bring judgment on Judah. What the Babylonians did not realize was that God was empowering them in order that they conquer the Assyrians, and thus march toward Jerusalem. All that the Babylonians accomplished, they thought they did on their own power. What they did not understand, however, was that God was working through them to bring national Israel to an end in the land of Palestine. The Babylonians gave credit to their own gods for what they militarily accomplished, when in reality their accomplishments were the work of God. Habakkuk's complaint was based on his inability to understand why God would work through the unbelieving Babylonians in order to oppress His own people.

HABAKKUK QUESTIONS GOD'S ANSWER

1:12-17 ***We will not die:*** Habakkuk trusted in God that His people would not be banished from existence as many peoples had in the past. They would continue, regardless of the suffering that they would endure at the hands of the unbelievers. ***Established them for correction:*** God had raised up the Babylonians for the discipline of His people. ***Too pure to look upon evil:*** God is holy, and thus He cannot look on that which is unholy. However, Habakkuk's question is how could God look on the unholy nation of the Chaldeans in order to accomplish His work of disciplining His holy nation. ***More righteous than he:*** Habakkuk would have in mind the oppressed righteous of Judah, not the nation itself. As a nation, Judah had become unrighteous. It was because of their unrighteousness as a nation that God allowed the Babylonians to extend their conquests even to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Unfortunately, because of their national apostasy, the righteous within the nation had to suffer also. The righteous few were the victims of the unrighteous religious leaders and civil leadership of the nation. ***Fish:*** God's people had become like helpless fish that were caught and piled in heaps at the will of the fisherman. ***Their net:*** The Babylonians gave credit to their own gods (the net) for the captivity of the many people whom they had taken into captivity. What they did not realize was that God had raised them up as a warrior nation in order to bring judgment on Judah and Jerusalem.

Chapter 2

GOD'S ANSWER

2:1-4 ***Myself on the ramparts:*** After Habakkuk had given his previous complaints to God, he positioned himself in a place of prayer in order to wait for God's reply. He felt that he had established a case before God, and thus wanted to see how God would reply. ***When I am corrected:*** Habakkuk knew that his complaint was from himself on behalf of the faithful few. He thus concluded that because God was so working in a way that allowed His people to suffer, then there was some-

thing that he did not understand. He thus waited for an explanation of what God was doing. Nevertheless, as a man, he at least felt that there was some justification for his complaint concerning the suffering of the righteous at the hand of the unrighteous, who seem to prosper in all they do. He went to a place of solitude in order to wait for God's answer. ***Vision:*** God's answer to Habakkuk came by revelation in a vision. ***Write:*** What he saw was to be written for all, not just Habakkuk. Since the people would not understand why God was working through unbelieving nations until after the captivity, Habakkuk's complaint needed to be written for the returnees from captivity. ***May run:*** Though the message that he was to write would certainly spur one to flee from the approaching Chaldeans, reference here was probably to those who would initially read the message. They would run to broadcast it to others. Since so many had the same complaint that Habakkuk expressed, then they too needed to know the response from God. ***Appointed time:*** The vision related to things in the future. Its fulfillment was coming without delay. ***It will not tarry:*** The urgency of proclaiming the vision was based on the fact that it would come to pass. In personifying the vision, God instilled urgency that the vision will speedily run to all concerned. The historical events to which the vision pointed were coming to a culmination in fulfillment. The end of national independent Israel was near. The final captivity of the people was to begin, but would last only seventy years according to the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jr 25:11). ***The just will live by his faith:*** See Rm 1:17; Gl 3:11; Hb 10:38. This would be the foundation upon which the message of the book rests. Regardless of the historical calamities in which men must live, those who are of God walk by their faith in the fact that God has all things under control (See comments Rm 8:28).

The Five Woes (2:5-20)

Outline: (1) Woe to the plunderer (2:5-8), (2) Woe to the greedy (2:9-11), (3) Woe to the deceitful worker (2:12-14), (4) Woe to the exploiter (2:15-17), (5) Woe to the idolater (2:18-20)

WOE TO THE PLUNDERER

2:5-8 ***Wine betrays him:*** The thoughts of verses 5 & 6 probably refer to the woes that follow. The Chaldeans of the previous context would be as one drunken with wine. There is personification on the effects of wine, which effects refer to the behavior of the Babylonians in their conquests of nations. The context, therefore, is not specifically about the evils of wine, but the metaphorical application of the evils of wine in reference to the Babylonians. ***Does not stay at home:*** As the drunkard is one who is rarely at home in order to assume his responsibilities of his household, so the Chaldean army is always on the roam, seeking nations to plunder. The drunkard cannot have enough wine. Neither can the Babylonian Empire expand too far in their conquest of other nations. As death is never satisfied with enough dead, so the Chaldeans were never satisfied with enough conquests. ***Parable against him:*** The nations taunt the oppressing Chaldeans for their ruthless passion to conquer other nations. ***Woe to him:*** Woe is to the Chaldeans who would increase their empire through the plunder of other nations. They are uncaring and unmerciful. The Chaldeans are as one who loans money with excessive interest. They victimize those they conquer by extracting heavy tribute. However, those from whom they exacted tribute would in the future plunder them. They would reap what they had sown (See Is 33:1).

WOE TO THE GREEDY

2:9-11 This is a song of taunt. It is a song against the arrogance of the Babylonians in their conquest of others for the sake of their own aggrandizement. Babylon was not an empire that developed because of the ingenuity or productivity of the people. It was an empire that grew through the plunder of other nations. Babylon fed off that which others had accomplished. Through their covetousness, the Babylonians built their own houses. ***Nest on high:*** Though the Babylonians felt secure in their own military power, they would be brought down. They had ignored the principle of retribution. They were a nation that generated great animosity, which animosity among the nations would eventually build to the point that others would rise up against them. In fact, in their latter years of existence, there was so much resentment within the Babylonian kingdom that the Medes and Persians easily overcame the city of Babylon with little resistance. ***Stone ... beam:*** Those materials that they had acquired through plunder would eventually cry out for revenge.

WOE TO THE DECEITFUL WORKER

2:12-14 This same judgment statement is made of Jerusalem (Mc 3:10) and Jehoiakim (Jr 22:13,17). These are condemnations of those who build at the expense of the lives of others. ***Fuel for the fire:*** All the labors that the Babylonians put into the building of their empire would eventually go up in smoke. All their labors will have been in vain once the empire came to an end. The futility of their means of building an empire is illustrated throughout history. Nations that are built on the blood of others come to an end. There has always been an end to barbaric empires. Only those nations that are built on the eternal principles of God endure throughout the ages. However, once these nations forsake the moral principles of God, as did Israel, they too will come to an end. Israel was restored as a remnant to the land of Palestine only when she repented in captivity. ***Filled with the knowledge:*** There is possibly Messianic meaning in the statement of verse 14 (See comments Dn 2 & 7).

WOE TO THE EXPLOITER

2:15-17 The effects of wine in the hands of the drunkard are carried on into this woe in order to describe the folly of the Chaldeans. The effects of strong drink cause one to become insensible. In his drunkenness he becomes the center of attraction of those who pity his senseless behavior. As the one who gives drink to his neighbor in order to make him drunk, so the Chaldeans metaphorically made their neighboring nations intoxicated in order to expose their nakedness. And once exposed, they were subjected to conquest and plunder. ***Drink***

and be exposed: It was now judgment day for those who had poured out their oppression on others. As they exposed the nations to defeat, so the Babylonians would suffer calamity because of the judgment of God. ***The cup:*** This would be the cup of the Lord's wrath that would be poured out on those who ravaged others. It was a time for retribution on those who had caused tribulation for others. ***Lebanon:*** The Babylonians had cut down the forest of Lebanon in their conquest of the land of Palestine (See Is 14:8).

WOE TO THE IDOLATER

2:18-20 ***What profit is the graven image:*** The message here is a taunt of the idols that were made by the hands of men. The trust of men in such senseless and speechless creations of one's hands is indicative of the religious depravity of the people. The folly of the idol worshiper is in the fact that his senseless idol responds only to that which the worshiper already has in his own mind. The idol worshiper is thus speaking to himself. That which he requests is answered from within himself. The answers of the idol are only the imagination of the idolater. The ridicule of the idols in this context, therefore, is actually a pronouncement of the foolishness of the idolater. ***The Lord is in His holy temple:*** The fact that God exists in His realm reassures the faithful that He is working all things together for His purpose. And since He is working, then the faithful must be reassured that all things are working together for good for those who love God (Rm 8:28). Though the faithful Israelites might not understand why they were going through suffering, they must trust that God was working. And when God is working, the righteous must have faith that He is doing that which is right. The righteous Israelite would eventually understand the reason for their suffering once the people had transitioned through the captivity. Unfortunately, the immediate recipients of the words of Habakkuk who received this message, would never personally realize God's answer, for they would have all died by the end of the captivity. But we on this side of the captivity understand the reason for the suffering of the captivity. And in understanding the reason, we can endure suffering at the hands of the unbelievers until we are delivered from this world (See comments Rm 8:28; 1 Co 10:13; Rv 21:4).

A Hymn Of Praise
(3:1-19)

Outline: (1) Prayer for restoration (3:1,2), (2) Vision for a future (3:3-16), (3) Walk by faith (3:17-19)

Chapter 3
PRAYER FOR RESTORATION

3:1,2 This is a psalm of supplication. Habakkuk prayed for the intervention of God in the affairs of the nations. He realized that God's work among the nations was for the benefit of His purpose with His people. The prayer, therefore, is that God take action. ***Shigionoth:*** The exact meaning of this word is not known. Some have suggested that reference was to stringed instruments, or it may have been some other musical term. ***Afraid:*** Fear of God is a motive for obedience. One responds to the word of God, knowing that all things are working according to His purpose. Therefore, one must walk in the direction of His word in order to walk according to the purpose of God. The problem with Israel was that they no longer feared God, and thus were walking out of harmony with His word and plan. ***Revive Your work:*** Israel had gone astray from God to the point that God could no longer use them as the nation through whom to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. God had to reform Israel, which He did through captivity. The repentant remnant that came forth out of captivity when the Medo-Persians conquered the Babylonians, was a different Israel than the one that went into captivity (See comments Er and Ne). After the captivity, God's work was revived, and thus the promises made to the fathers could be fulfilled (See Gn 12:1-3). ***Remember mercy:*** This would be Habakkuk's resignation to the work of God, and thus he calls on God to remember His faithful remnant. God's mercy would involve the restoration of His people from captivity. They would return to Palestine, but never again to have autonomous possession of it.

VISION FOR A FUTURE

3:3-16 God is pictured as coming from Teman and Paran in order to deliver His people (Compare Jg 5:4). He comes in a great storm cloud, causing the earth to shake and tremble. The symbolism is probably from the time when God delivered Israel from Egyptian captivity. When God takes action to accomplish His work, the heavens tremble and the earth shakes. The cataclysmic picture of the natural world in this scene is the height of imagery that depicts the greatness of God. If the coming of God causes such a disturbance in His creation, then certainly He has the power to deliver His people. ***My stomach trembled:*** Habakkuk's response to the overwhelming revelation of God's power and work was only natural. He physically and emotionally collapsed at the awesome vision. In the book of Job, God asked Job to consider all the wonders that He had created. Job concluded that since God could create such great things, then certainly He could control all that exists. The vision here is similar. If God's presence can cause such disturbance in the things that He created, then certainly He can control all that man does on the earth. ***Rest in the day of trouble:*** The awesomeness of God's power brings reassurance to the hearts of the faithful. It brings comfort in that the suffering can resign themselves to the fact that God is in control of all things. In the midst of the international turmoil that was prevalent in the history of Israel, Habakkuk was reassured that God was in control of the events that were transpiring. Trouble would come upon Judah in the end. However, trouble would come upon the Babylonians, which trouble would lead to their end. And the end of the Babylonian Empire meant the freedom of the captives.

WALK BY FAITH

3:17-19 These verses are a climax to the message of the book. Habakkuk was confident because of his faith. In the face of either a hostile environment, or turbulent international affairs, he would stand firm in the Lord. These are words

of one who through faith had transcended the affairs of this world. They are the words of one who would not allow his environment to determine his spirit (See comments Ph 4:4). Habakkuk's faith was his victory (1 Jn 5:4).

Zephaniah

WRITER

We know nothing of the life of Zephaniah other than what is stated in 1:1. We understand the nature of his ministry only by what is revealed in this book. In the introductory verse, Zephaniah traced his lineage back four generations. His great, great grandfather was King Hezekiah of Judah. He was thus of royal lineage.

The name Zephaniah means "he whom the Lord has protected," or, "he whom the Lord hides." He was a prophet who was contemporary with Jeremiah, and his predecessors were Nahum and Habakkuk. He was probably a resident of Jerusalem. Because he was born of a royal family, he probably associated easily with the royalty of the time, though his ministry of teaching in this book reach the general population.

DATE

The book is dated from the reign of Josiah, which would be somewhere between 640 to 609 B.C. We do not know if the prophecy of Zephaniah took place during the period of Josiah's reign before the book of the Lord was discovered in the temple during repairs, or after the discovery of the book and the great reforms of Josiah (See 2 Ch 34). The contents of the book indicate that the message was delivered prior to the discovery of the book of the law, and thus would have been delivered between 640 to 621 B.C., assuming that the book of the law was discovered in 621 B.C. Therefore, in the midst of ignorance of the law of God, he ministered the word of God.

BOOK

Zephaniah was a prophet of passion. He was such because he saw the coming day of the Lord as a harsh judgment of those who had worked against the people of God. He also considered the judgment of God as God's means by which He would cleanse His people of idol heresy and social injustices. He focused on the imminent invasion and devastation of the land by foreign powers. He thus hopes for a remnant that would survive the coming calamity that would befall Judah (2:3). He was reassured that a remnant would survive, but it would be a humbled remnant that would give themselves to God (3:5-20).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Zephaniah's time was a time of great moral decay among God's people. There was stirring in the international affairs of nations, and thus God was building a nation to bring down judgment on His people in punishment for their apostasy from Him. The Assyrian Empire that had taken the northern kingdom into captivity in 722/21 B.C. was coming to an end. The Chaldeans (Babylonians), who had been a part of the Assyrian Empire, were in the process of rebelling against Assurbanipal, the last king of Assyria. Under the leadership of Nebopolassar, king of Babylon, the Babylonians, in an alliance with the Scythians, would conquer Nineveh in 612 B.C.

Following the deaths of Manasseh and Amon, who unrighteously reigned over Judah, Josiah was a young boy of eight years old when he became king of Judah. He became a king of a nation that was largely given over to idol worship. It was a nation of people that had no copy of the law of God, and thus the people had created religious beliefs and behavior after the nations around them. The rulers were corrupt and the religious leaders led the people further away from God. Zephaniah describes the people as arrogant and rebellious. The courts were corrupt and the civil leaders oppressed the poor for their own benefit.

Josiah came to the throne in 639 B.C. He had been brought up by the godly high priest, Hilkiah. At the age of twenty, he began an initial effort to do away with idol worship throughout Judah (2 Ch 34:3-7). When he was twenty-six, he began a renovation of the temple, during which a copy of the Old Testament law was discovered (2 Ch 34:8-28). He read the warnings of what God would do if Israel departed from His word. He read that the people would be put out of the land of Palestine if they forsook God (Dt 28–30). Josiah then made a covenant with God that he would restore the people to the law of God (2 Ch 34:29-33). From the time of the discovery of the law of God in 621 B.C., he conducted a diligent campaign to rid the pagan shrines and idols from the land. He restored the Passover (2 Kg 23:1-25). His reforms were exhaustive throughout the land, but the reforms did not reach the hearts of the people. After his death, the people quickly returned to their idol worship.

When Nineveh fell in 612 B.C., a remnant of Assyrian leaders and soldiers fled to Carchemish where they made a last stand against the Babylonians. The Assyr-

ians called on the Egyptians to align with them in the battle. On his way to help the Assyrians at Carchemish, Pharaoh-necho of Egypt passed through Palestine. Josiah foolishly sought to stop the Egyptians, but subsequently was killed in the battle (2 Kg 23:29,30). It was during these times of uncertainly, therefore, that Zephaniah ministered his message to the people in order to given them hope for the future.

Warning Of Judgment
(1:1 – 3:7)

Outline: (1) Introduction (1:1), (2) The sins of Judah (1:2-18), (2) Judgment of the nations (2:1 – 3:7)

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1:1 ***Zephaniah:*** See 1 Ch 6:36; Jr 21:1; Zc 6:10,14. Because of the meaning of his name (See "Writer" in intro.), it has been suggested that Zephaniah was born during the wicked reign of Manasseh. No greater detail in genealogy was ever given to any prophet of God. Since this genealogy takes us back to King Hezekiah, it is assumed that Zephaniah wanted us to understand that he was of royal blood.

THE SINS OF JUDAH

1:2,3 The universality of the judgment that is pronounced here reminds us of God's assessment and condemnation of the world that existed during the days of Noah (Gn 6). Judgment was coming, and to the Judean resident, it would be as if the entire world was affected as in the days of Noah.

1:4-6 Those who would be judged were the idolaters who had turned from the Lord. Idolatry is the desire of man to mold his religious beliefs and behavior according to his own lusts. Idolatry, therefore, is the manifestation of a rebellious person who seeks to follow after his own desires. ***Every trace of Baal:*** Since the judgment would include Judah and Jerusalem, Zephaniah revealed the effect the captivity would have on God's people. Idolatry would be eradicated from the people. When the captives returned from Babylon in 536 B.C., they would never again bring idolatry into the streets of Jerusalem. ***Chemarims:*** This was a reference to the priests of idolatry. ***Hosts of heaven:*** Reference was to the Assyrian worship of heavenly bodies (See Dt 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kg 21:3; Jb 31:26-28; Ez 8:15-18). ***Swear by the Lord ... Molech:*** They were spiritual adulterers. Some translations use the word "Malcham" which was the national god of the Ammonites. However, more recent translations render the text as a reference to Molech (See 2 Kg 23:10; Jr 32:35). The judgment extended to those who had backslidden and those who were indifferent to the word of God. The extent to which the judgment was to go indicated that Israel was no longer useful for God to fulfill His work of bringing the Messiah into the world. Therefore, a national cleansing was necessary in order to rid the people of all those who were not loyal to God.

1:7-9 ***Hold your peace:*** The time for complaints and discussion was over. It was a time to be silent in the presence of the judgment that God was bringing on the unrighteous. ***Day of the Lord:*** This was the day of judgment. It would be a day of calamity for the unrighteous, but a day of deliverance for the righteous. ***Sacrifice:*** The day of the Lord was a day when the invited guests were to come before the Lord with their sacrifices. ***I will punish:*** In the context of verse 12, those who would suffer the judgment of the day of the Lord would be the unrighteous of Jerusalem. ***Princes:*** Since the apostasy of the nation was led by the princes and kings, then the judgment would first come to them (See Rv 19:17-21). ***Foreign garments:*** The royalty dressed themselves in the fashions of the Assyrians in order to identify with their culture. Their dress, therefore, signified their betrayal to their homeland in order to be identified with pagan cultures. By their dress they revealed the idol culture after which they wanted to be identified. ***Leap on the threshold:*** This was probably a reference to a violent entrance into one's house by passing through the threshold of the house without permission.

1:10-13 The day of the Lord would mean that the merchants and international traders would be cut off. ***Fish Gate:*** This entrance to Jerusalem was on the north side of the city (Ne 3:3). It would be on this side of the city that the invaders, coming from the north, would first approach Jerusalem. ***Second Quarter:*** Or, New Town. This was probably a new addition to the city that was in the northern part of the city (See 2 Ch 33:14). ***Maktesh:*** This was believed to be a resort for merchants. When the invasion came from those who would bring the proxy judgment of God on Jerusalem, all who would be associated with trade in and around Jerusalem would be affected. The picture of calamity here describes the termination of a great merchant center. In the destruction of Jerusalem, the economy of Palestine would be shut down. ***Search Jerusalem with candles:*** No one would be hidden from the judgment of the day of the Lord. Through the invaders, God would find every person who had become indifferent to His will and who had dressed themselves in the garments of idolatry. ***Stagnant in spirit:*** The reference here in Hebrew was a metaphor that defined those who were slothful and indifferent. Those who should have been concerned about the low spiritual condition of the people were lax and lazy. Those who should have been alert concerning the safety of the people had become indifferent to the threat of those who would conquer and rule over God's people. Because they believed that God was distant from their everyday lives, they became complacent in reference to God being involved with the people. They became a spiritually lazy people who carried on their lives without considering their relationship with God as His people among the nations. ***Become a booty:*** That for which they had worked so hard without God, would be taken from them. Through death and captivity, the Israelite population would be vacated from Jerusalem.

1:14-18 Verses 14-18 explain the tragedy that would prevail when the day of the Lord came. It was a time of terror

for those on whom God would pour His judgment through the proxy of the Babylonians. ***In the land:*** In the historical context, reference would be to the termination of Judah through the destruction of Jerusalem. The destruction that would be unleashed on Jerusalem would be the finality of an era. It would be the end of national independent Israel in the promised land. A remnant would eventually return to the land, but the remnant would dwell in a land that was under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire, and eventually the Greeks and Romans. Thus the devastation and finality that is pictured in these verses is a description of the termination of something that would never again be reestablished. Some translations render the last phrase "in the earth." Such a rendering is justified if the destruction of Jerusalem is understood as a metaphor of the final destruction that will come at the end of time (Compare comments 2 Pt 3). Any destruction of the day of the Lord in time illustrates the destruction that will take place at the end of time.

Chapter 2
JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

2:1-3 ***Undesirable nation:*** As they stood in their apostate nature, they were a nation that was of no use for the purpose for which God originally called them into existence. They were a foreign nation to God because they had forsaken Him for an existence that they had created after their own desires. Zephaniah's call in this text is that the righteous few pull themselves together in order to be identified with God. He pleads that they take notice of the calamity that was about to be poured out on them. His plea assumes that some may escape the calamity with their lives. When the end came to Judah and Jerusalem, the prophets encouraged those who would live to turn themselves over to the Babylonians and captivity. Those who did would survive the calamity of the destruction of Jerusalem. Because of Zephaniah's plea, we thus assume that there was still a righteous remnant among the apostates. The apostates were responsible for leading the nation to both civil and moral ruin. Though the righteous remnant would survive, they would have to suffer the calamity of the termination of Judah and Jerusalem.

2:4-7 The Philistines dwelt in the major coastal trade route between the continent of Africa and the nations to the north of Palestine. They were always a people under threat, and thus in the final days of national Israel, they would suffer from the calamity. First conquered by the Assyrians, they would eventually succumb to the Babylonians when they invaded and subjected the land of Palestine. ***Cherethites:*** This would be a reference to the Philistines who migrated from the island of Crete around 1,200 B.C. and settled on the coastal area of southern Palestine. The use of the name "Canaan" in this context may refer to the greedy traders of the Philistines. The land of the Philistines would be depopulated to the point that the land would become a place only for shepherds and flocks. All commerce would cease. ***The remnant:*** God would visit the righteous remnant in order to protect them from the calamity that He would allow to come upon the unrighteous. Though the unrighteous would be economically devastated, God would restore the fortunes of the righteous remnant. When the repentant remnant returned from captivity in 536 B.C., this is what transpired. God returned the remnant in order that they dwell in the land of their heritage.

2:8-11 See Am 1:13-15; 2:1-3. The nations of both Moab and Ammon were unfriendly to the Israelites. They continually taunted the Israelites, particularly when Israel was under the oppression of other nations. When weak militarily, the Moabites and Ammonites seized the land of Reuben and Gad. Their punishment for such actions against Israel would be that they would be terminated as nations. They would suffer utter destruction, never to be restored in history as nations. ***Starve all the gods:*** Their gods would vanish away because the nations would cease to exist. Nations prided themselves in their national gods. But when the people ceased to be a nation, the patriotic gods they had created after their own imagination ceased to exist.

2:12 ***Ethiopians:*** Ethiopia was the land of Cush which was south of Egypt. Reference here would possibly include the land of Egypt since the Ethiopian dynasties often extended their rule over the Egyptians.

2:13-15 See comments Nh. At the time of Zephaniah's ministry, the Assyrian Empire was coming to an end. Once the Assyrians had taken the northern kingdom into captivity in 722/21 B.C., they were a continual threat to Judah. However, the heavily fortified city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Though Nineveh felt secure behind her fortifications, she succumbed to the ruthless army of the Babylonians and Scythians. The city was destroyed to the point of never being rebuilt again. ***Desert owl:*** Some have rendered the Hebrew word "vulture" or "jackdaw." ***Bittern:*** Other translations rendered this word "hedgehog" or "porcupine."

Chapter 3

3:1-7 Zephaniah turns to a description of the morally degraded society of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a morally rotten city because of the wicked leadership of the rulers and religious leaders. ***She does not obey:*** The inhabitants of Jerusalem had long forgotten the voice of instruction, and thus they were a rebellious people in that they created their own social standards, which standards led to the oppression of the poor. ***Roaring lions:*** The leaders were as beasts looking for financial prey. They feasted off the poor. The civil leaders maintained their existence at the expense of the poor. They thus could not be trusted since they had their own selves at heart. ***Her prophets:*** The religious leaders maintained their existence by conforming to the desires of the civil leaders. They could not be trusted for what they spoke. Instead of being spiritual leaders who would lead people to the law of God, they were self-centered religionists who maintained their positions at the expense of the people. ***Violence to the law:*** The religious leaders made no distinction between the holy and defiled, and thus rejected the judgments of the law (See comments Mk 7:1-9). They rejected the law of God in order to maintain their own religiosity that was created after their own desires. ***He will not do injustice:*** God was working in

their presence in order to bring justice to an apostate generation. The calamity of judgment that He was bringing on them was just, for they had sinned against His purpose for their very existence. Since they had forsaken the law of God, then it would be just for God to bring judgment upon them for their sin (See comments Hs 4:6). ***Every morning:*** God's laws of nature come to light every morning. The natural world obeys the laws of nature without fail. But Jerusalem failed to be obedient to her creator. The moral laws of God that were to be obeyed without fail were forgotten in the society of Jerusalem. ***Surely you will fear Me:*** God had worked throughout the history of Israel to keep His people directed by His will. He worked among the nations in order to discipline them to obey. He even brought the Assyrians to the walls of Jerusalem during the reign of King Sennacherib, and threatened the inhabitants of Jerusalem with destruction. But they would not obey. All efforts to stimulate repentance had failed, and thus it was time for termination through captivity.

Promise Of Restoration
(3:8-20)

Outline: (1) Judgment to cleanse (3:8-13), (2) Hope for the righteous remnant (3:14-20)

JUDGMENT TO CLEANSE

3:8-13 Zephaniah called on the people of God to be patient. God would eventually execute judgment on those nations that brought suffering on them. It would be a day for the outpouring of the indignation of God on the nations who tormented His people (See Is 66:6; Jr 25:31-33; Ez 38,39; Jl 3:11-16). ***Purified language:*** The speech of God's people would be cleansed of all idol terminology and references to idol worship (Compare Is 6:5-7). Once the people were cleansed of their idolatrous ways, they could come to the Lord with a pure heart. ***Serve Him with one accord:*** Once their hearts were cleansed, then they could come before the Lord as one people. They would stand together as one people in their belief in the one true and living God. ***Beyond ... Ethiopia:*** Ethiopia would be a distant land from which exiles would return to Jerusalem. Zephaniah seems to be looking beyond the judgment of Jerusalem and its destruction, to the time of the return of the exiles after their release in 536 B.C. (See comments Er and Ne). ***A humble and lowly people:*** The returnees from the Babylonian captivity would certainly be a humbled people, no longer arrogant in their own devices. The arrogant ones will have been removed from their midst when they returned to the land of their possession. However, those who would partake of the new covenant would be a people who had humbled themselves at the cross of Christ in obedience to the gospel (See 1 Pt 5:5-7). Reference here would be to the age of the Messiah when the people would be cleansed of their sins by their obedience to the gospel (See comments At 2:38; 1 Co 1:2; 1 Jn 1:9).

HOPE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS REMNANT

3:14-20 Zephaniah gives hope to those who were headed for calamity in the destruction of Jerusalem. However, the hope he gives to those who would eventually return to the land, would be hope of an era beyond their repossession of the land. He takes the minds of the people to the Messianic era wherein they would forever be protected from the evils of the nations that would afflict them. God would dwell among them, and thus be their continual deliverer. ***Taken away your judgments:*** The judgments that were pronounced upon the unrighteous of Judah would not be pronounced against God's people in the future. God's people would be a people whose sins were forgiven as they walked in the light of God's will (Is 40:2; 1 Jn 1:9). ***Cast out your enemy:*** The enemy of the people was sin. And thus, when they are restored to a new covenant relationship with God, God would not remember their sins (See comments Jr 31:31-34). ***Do not let your hands be weak:*** Because God would be in their midst, they could be strong in heart. God would rejoice over those who gave themselves to Him. Those who grieved over their inability to be in the assembly of God would be restored to the land because of their repentance. Those in the Messianic kingdom who mourned over their sins, would come into the kingdom of Jesus (See comments Mt 5:1-16). ***I will bring you:*** This last note of hope infers their restoration from the captivity of the nations, but also their deliverance from the bondage of sin in the Messianic era. They would once again take delight in the fact that they were the people of God (See comments Rm 1:16).

Haggai

WRITER

The Haggai was the writer of this book. We know nothing of him other than what is written in the book and what is stated in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. The name Haggai means "festive" or "festival." At the time of the writing of the book, we know that he was a former exile in Babylonian captivity who had recently returned to Palestine. When the Medo-Persians, under the kingship of King Cyrus, released the captives in 536 B.C., Haggai was among the initial captives who returned to the land. Zechariah was a contemporary prophet at the time of Haggai's ministry.

DATE

Haggai dated the book between August and December according to our calendar today. According to the dating of the book, it is assumed that Haggai's prophecy took place in 520 B.C.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

God spoke through Haggai eighteen years after the first captives returned to the land of Palestine. The temple in Jerusalem was still lying in ruins. The local leaders of the people were discouraged. They were discouraged because of the great opposition that they faced when they initially returned to the land. The Samaritan race had developed in the land, and thus did not want the Jews to reestablish their identity. There was thus a lethargy among the leaders of the returned Jews (See comments Er and Ne).

At the time of Haggai's ministry, Darius Hystaspes was the king of Persia. A decree had formerly gone out from the Persian throne to stop the rebuilding of the temple. But Darius was interested in the development of local religious beliefs, and thus reversed the decree. Through the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah, God commanded the Jews to rebuild the temple.

Call For Action
(1:1-15)

Outline: (1) The cause of delay (1:1-6), (2) Time for action (1:7-15)

Chapter 1
THE CAUSE OF DELAY

1:1,2 The word of the Lord came to Haggai during the reign of Darius in 520 B.C. The message came during one of the Jewish feasts, and thus the people were gathered together (See 2 Kg 4:23; Am 8:5), giving Haggai the opportune time to deliver his encouragement that the people begin the work of rebuilding the temple. ***Zerubbabel:*** He is called the son of Pedaiah in 1 Chronicles 3:19. Though he was the son of Pedaiah, through a levirate marriage he was also the legal son of Shealtiel. Since his grandfather was King Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), he was a descendant of the Davidic kings. Zerubbabel did not assume the role of a king, for God had terminated the kings of Israel. However, God did use him to illustrate King Jesus who would come in the future of the restored remnant (See 2:20-23) ***Joshua:*** Joshua was the first high priest after the exile. His father was the high priest who was taken into captivity (1 Ch 6:15). His grandfather, Seraiah, was killed by Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. (2 Kg 25:18-21). ***The time has not come:*** Since the Samaritans had fought against the reestablishment of the Jews in the land, the Jews may have concluded that their opposition was a sign from God that they not rebuild the temple. Some have assumed that they believed that the seventy years of exile had not actually been completed, and thus they felt that it was not yet time to rebuild the temple (See Jr 25:11).

1:3-6 While the people were carrying on with their efforts to reestablish themselves in the land, they neglected the task of rebuilding the temple. It thus took this direct word from the Lord in order to stimulate them to do the work of rebuilding the temple. Sometime after their initial arrival in the land, they became discouraged. We are not told how long it had been since they terminated their efforts to rebuild. But it was long enough for God to call a prophet in order to tell the people that they need to resume the work. ***Consider your ways:*** It seems that they were more concerned over the material things of life than the reinstitution of the things that pertained to the reestablishment of the symbol that represented God among the returnees. As a result of their neglect, God was not prospering their labors in the land. They may have thought that they would prosper themselves before they gave their labors to rebuild the temple. They were seeking their own kingdoms first, rather than the kingdom of God (See comments Mt 6:25-34).

TIME FOR ACTION

1:7-11 ***And I will take pleasure in it:*** God called them out of their state of indifference in order that they focus on those things that pertained to Him. The cut stones of the destroyed temple of Solomon would still remain. God urged them to go to the mountains in order to acquire wood for the construction. The promises that God had made through the prophets concerning the rebuilding of the temple had not been completed (See Is 40–60). God thus reminded them that their labors in their fields was not bringing forth fruit because they had neglected laboring for Him in rebuilding the temple. While they had built paneled houses for themselves, they had neglected those things that manifested their interests in the things of God. As in their days before the captivity, God brought drought on the land in order to stimulate a response. Before the captivity, the droughts came in order to restore them to God. In this historical context, the drought was brought on the land in order to stir them into action.

1:12-15 ***Obeyed the voice of the Lord:*** Those captives who came as a remnant from Babylon were encouraged to build because they trusted the word of the Lord that came through Haggai and Zechariah. Because they feared the Lord, they set their hands to the work. ***I am with you:*** See Gn 28:15; Ex 3:12; Ja 1:5. ***They came and worked:*** When people fear the Lord, they will work. When people become indifferent to the things of God, they will waste their lives away in things that pertain to this world.

Call For Courage, Patience and Faith
(2:1-23)

Outline: (1) Call for courage (2:1-9), (2) Call for patience (2:10-19), (3) Call for faith (2:20-23)

Chapter 2
CALL FOR COURAGE

2:1-5 About a month later, this second message came to Haggai for the people. It seems that the people had become discouraged in their work of rebuilding the temple. ***Who is left among you who saw this house:*** There were a few among them who had seen the grandeur of Solomon's temple before it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Haggai himself

may have been one of these people. In making a comparison between what Solomon had built and what they were about to do, they must not be discouraged. This small community of poor Jews could not rebuild the temple to the grandeur of the temple that Solomon built. Therefore, they must not be discouraged because of their inabilities. They must worry about that which they could do. The point in rebuilding the temple was not in what they would accomplish. God was not concerned about the physical structure of the temple (See comments Jn 4:20-24; At 17:24). His concern was in the fact that they identify themselves again as the people of God in the land. In order to do this, they had to reinstitute all that they had forsaken in their apostasy. ***Be strong ... and work:*** The Samaritans had discouraged the people, and thus they earlier stopped their work on the rebuilding (See comments Er & Ne). God thus reassured them that He was with them. Their work, therefore, was of the Lord. ***My Spirit remains among you:*** God reassured them that the Holy Spirit was among them in order that they accomplish the goal of completing the work on the temple. As He had been with their forefathers when they came out of Egyptian captivity, He was with them in the rebuilding of the temple.

2:6-9 ***I will shake the heavens and the earth:*** As God shook Mount Sinai when He established a covenant with Israel and gave them the law, He would shake the nations in giving a new covenant in the future (See comments Jr 31:31-34). There would be turmoil throughout the nations until the coming of the Messiah (See comments in intro. to Dn). However, at the end of this shaking of the nations, God would again reveal Himself to man through His Son. This Son would ascend to the right hand of God and reign over all nations of this world (See comments Dn 2:44; 7:13,14; Ph 2:5-11). Though the Jews to whom Haggai spoke would have understood none of these prophecies, they at least were given hope that their efforts were part of God's eternal plan for the ages. God was working through the restored remnant in order to lay the foundation for the coming of the Messiah. Their work of rebuilding the temple, therefore, involved more than laying stones to build a house. God had in mind the spiritual house that was yet in their future.

CALL FOR PATIENCE

2:10-14 Haggai asked two questions for the priests to answer. The first was if a garment that was bearing holy meat would make holy that which it touched. The answer to the question was that it would not. The second question was if that which is made unclean by touching a dead body could defile that which it touched. The priests' answer was that the defiled, or unclean, would make unclean that which it touched. The point of the two questions was that it was easier to become defiled than it was to become clean. That which was ceremonially holy could not make holy that which it touched. That which was unclean, however, would make unclean the person who touched it, and whoever the person touched (See Nm 19:11-22). ***So is this people:*** These were the Jews whom Haggai addressed. ***That which they offer:*** The Jews had erected an altar. The error of the people was that they thought that their past sin of indifference in reference to the rebuilding of the temple would be forgiven if they ceremonially performed offerings on the altar. The point was that their inactivity had defiled them to the point that God would not accept their sacrifices on the altar. He had brought drought upon the land as punishment for their indifference.

2:15-19 The lesson from the questions to the priests was that it was easy to become defiled, but not easy to be cleansed. Therefore, one must not think that a simple change of direction would immediately produce results. They had to live with the consequences of their own sin. In this case, Haggai wanted them to be patient for the blessings that would result from their repentance. They would have to labor against many difficulties that were created by their sins. They had labored greatly in order to please their own selves in building their houses and cultivating their land. Since they had now changed to labor in building the temple, they would have to be patient until God brought forth fruit from their labors. They had been idle for years since the time they had terminated their efforts to rebuild the temple, during which time of idleness God had stricken their crops (See Dt 28:22). From the time they began to lay the foundation of the temple, there would be no immediate signs that God was blessing them for beginning the work on the temple. They must be patient for the blessings. But from the 24th day of the month Kislev (December), the day the foundation was laid, God would from that time start to bless them in giving increase to their crops. God made this promise to bless their crops because they took the initiative to rebuild the temple. They had to take action before God would take action to bless them. God has never changed in this principle of how He works in the lives of His people. God does not work in the lives of those who do not express their faith by their works (See comments Js 2:14-26). God opens doors when men step out on faith. In the historical context of what happened in the rebuilding of the temple and walls was that God went to work for the people when they went to work to accomplish what He wanted them to do.

CALL FOR FAITH

2:20-23 This final message of the book was addressed to Zerubbabel. This was a repetition of the prophecy 2:6. God would shake the nations in order to bring about His purposes of bringing the Messiah into the world. Zerubabbel is here used as the type of the King Jesus that would come. ***Signet:*** This was a ring with the sign of the owner engraved on it. It was used as a signature of authority when the engraved sign was pressed on a document. The significance here was that Zerubbabel was made the leadership symbol of the nation in anticipation of the Messiah whom Zerubbabel would symbolize. As Zerubbabel was the initial leader of the exiles when they returned from captivity, so King Jesus, of the Davidic kings, would be the Deliverer for all those who would seek to escape the captivity of sin. Jesus would lead out of the captivity of sin those who would seek freedom. As Zerubbabel led an initial remnant of captives out of captivity, Jesus would lead a remnant of captives who would be the new Jerusalem of God's people. The kingdom of the Messiah would be es-

tablished above the kingdoms of this world (See comments Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). Jesus would reign as king from heaven over all things (Ep 1:20-23). He would call all men to walk by faith in obedience to His leadership (Rm 10:17). Those who would respond to His gospel call would be the submitted of the kingdom. They would be His body, the church. Therefore, the extent of the kingdom reign of Jesus is universal over all things. Those of the church are in the kingdom reign of Jesus. However, the kingdom of Jesus extends beyond the membership of the church. All the kings of the world are under the kingdom reign of Jesus, but not all kings are in the church (See comments Ep 1:18-23; 1 Pt 3:22).

Zechariah

WRITER

In Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, Zechariah is mentioned with Haggai as a prophet to those who had returned to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. There are 27 Zechariahs mentioned in the Bible. The Zechariah of this book was a priest of God and prophet to the returnees. Zechariah's name means "he whom the Lord remembers."

Zechariah was the son of Berechiah who was the son of Iddo (1:1). Ezra referred to him as the son of Iddo (Er 5:1; 6:14). Berechiah, Zechariah's father, died before Iddo, Zechariah's grandfather. And thus the account of Ezra focuses on Zechariah assuming the priestly heritage of his grandfather, rather than his father.

Iddo was a Levitical priest who returned from Babylonian captivity with the first returnees under the leadership of Zerubabbel (Ne 12:1,4,7). It may have been that Zechariah succeeded his grandfather in leadership of the Davidic priestly course (Ne 12:1-16). However, neither he nor Haggai took any leadership role among the returnees until after they had been in the land for eighteen years. Only then were they called by God to the ministry of prophecy. Zechariah was evidently a young man upon his initial arrival in the land with his family (2:4), and thus was used by God only when he was of age to fulfill the role of a prophet. Coming out of the captivity, he had hope for the people for the future. They were to wait for the coming of the Messiah, and thus, from the Messiah would a new nation be established, not according to the physical nation of Israel. It would be spiritual.

DATE

The prophecies of chapters 1–8 are dated in the text, and thus were delivered from 520 to 518 B.C. (1:1,7; 7:1). There is no dating of the contents of chapters 9–14. It may have been that Zechariah wrote these chapters many years after the initial eight chapters. From the content of the final chapters, it appears that they were written during the end of Zechariah's ministry in order to prepare the Jews for the international turmoil of which they would be victims until the coming of the Branch, the Messiah. The turmoil would come as nations struggled over possession of Palestine. Israel had lost all rights to their possession of Palestine in their captivities.

BOOK

Almost all Bible students credit Zechariah for writing chapters 1–8. Because of the content of chapters 9–14, it is assumed that some other author, or authors, wrote these chapters. However, there is little textual evidence to support this view, and thus we would assume the position of the Jews that Zechariah wrote all the book. The last section of the book was simply written during the latter years of Zechariah's ministry, and thus the content of the last section of the book was different, as well as the writing style.

Zechariah was gifted in writing in a poetical style. Much of the book was written in Hebrew, and thus the book joins the literary works of Hebrew poetry. Zechariah was given the privilege of seeing many visions, and thus through poetry he revealed the will of God to the people whom God sought to stir up to complete the rebuilding of the temple (Er 5:1,2; 6:14). In chapters 9–14 he wanted to prepare the Jews for the struggles that they would endure during the interbiblical period. He also wanted to give them hope that the Messiah would bring peace among those who became a part of the kingdom reign of the Messiah.

There is a great deal of metaphorical symbolism in this book. As Daniel, Zechariah often conveyed his message through apocalyptic figures in order to reveal events in the history of the Jewish community until the termination of national Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Bible student should thus be cautious about attaching literal interpretations on much of the content of the book, especially the content of chapters 9–14. Literalizing the content of apocalyptic literature has led many Bible students to conclude some erroneous teachings from Zechariah. Since many metaphors are used by Zechariah to communicate his message, one should be cautious about literalizing the metaphors in order to speculate some end-of-time theology that was never revealed to Zechariah. It is best to approach this book by first understanding the message figuratively, unless a context demands a literal interpretation. In this way we do not steal the prophecies of hope from those to whom they were originally directed, that is, the people of Israel in their hope for the coming Messiah. We do not hope for a Messiah, but for the return of our Redeemer.

Encouragement To Rebuild The Temple
(1:1 – 8:23)

Outline: (1) Call to repentance (1:1-6), (2) Visions of Zechariah (1:7 – 6:8), (3) Crowning of the King (6:9-15), (4) Questions concerning fasting (7:1 – 8:23)

Chapter 1
CALL TO REPENTANCE

1:1-6 Darius: The first eight chapters are dated in the second year of the Medo-Persian King Darius, or 520 B.C. This was two months after Haggai began his prophetic ministry in Palestine (Hg 1:1). ***Angry with your fathers:*** The fathers of the returnees were very rebellious against the will of God. God reminded the audience of Zechariah that He was angry with the rebellion of their fathers, and subsequently He sent them away into captivity. ***Return to Me:*** Haggai prophesied that those to whom he prophesied had become indifferent to the rebuilding of the temple. Zechariah seems to indicate that there was more to the matter than simply neglect and indifference. It seems that they had become spiritually indifferent and lazy. ***Do not be as your fathers:*** Before the captivity, the fathers of those who returned lived in arrogant rebellion to the will of God (7:7,12). They would not listen to the prophets who lived before the captivity. The prophets who lived before the captivity had written their message to the fathers who lived during the twilight years of Israel while they were still in the land. Those of the generation of Zechariah could read these prophets. But their reading of the prophets seemed to generate little interest in the work that they must do, that is, rebuild the temple. ***Evil way ... evil deeds:*** Their evil way and deeds were that they were doing nothing toward the restoration of the ceremonies of the law. The example of their fathers was a warning that they should not do the same. The fathers reaped the consequences of their rebellion. In the case of the returnees, they are exhorted to repent and return to the will of God.

VISIONS OF ZECHARIAH

1:7-11 It was a time when the people began to question whether Jerusalem would be glorified again. There was lethargy among the people concerning their responsibility to rebuild, but at the same time, they had difficulty in interpreting the time to go to work. The task of both Haggai and Zechariah was to move the people into action. In this vision, Zechariah was given a vision of a troop of horsemen in one of the glens near Jerusalem. These were the scouts of God who had been patrolling the earth. They brought back the report that the world was at peace. The message of the vision was that it was time for prosperity to be restored to Jerusalem and Judah. ***Red ... speckled and white:*** We are not told what significance there may have been in the color of the horses. The primary message was that the horsemen reported on every part of the earth. What was reported by the angels was that the world was at peace, while Jerusalem and Judah were still in misery.

1:12-17 ***These seventy years:*** The seventy years of captivity that was revealed through Jeremiah were coming to a close (See Jr 25:11,12; Hg 1:2). The mercy of God was to return to Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt within the city. God here speaks to the angel, who in turn delivers the message that it was time for Him to act, and thus time for the people to go to work in rebuilding. ***Zealous for Jerusalem:*** When God is zealous for His people, they prosper (See Is 42:13; 59:17; Ez 36:5,6; 38:19). He was thus stirred for His people. ***Increased the calamity:*** The unbelieving nations whom God used to punish Jerusalem had done more than they should have in bringing an end to national Israel and destroying the city (See Is 10:5,6; Hk 1:5,6). They went too far in the sense of trying to terminate the existence of Jews from history. But now it was time for a message that would reassure the people concerning their mission to rebuild what the unbelieving nations had destroyed. The Israel of God was to be identified again as a people who were in a covenant relationship with God. ***My house will be built:*** As the tabernacle, the temple was an indication of the presence of God among His people with whom He had established a covenant. Its rebuilding was a sign that God was again with His people in the land from which He had driven them. Once the people set their hands to rebuilding the temple, it was completed four years later in the sixth year of Darius (Er 6:15). ***A measuring line:*** This was a figure representing the rebuilding of the city, which it was seventy years later by Nehemiah (Ne 6:15). ***My cities:*** God's promise to be with them in rebuilding extended beyond the rebuilding of Jerusalem. His promise was to be with them throughout their rebuilding of the cities of the land. The fulfillment of this prophecy took place throughout several years of rebuilding, specifically during the era of the Hasmonean rulers of Israel. ***Will again comfort:*** This is the first indication in Zechariah concerning the Messianic era that was to come. All that is stated in this first vision was to reassure the returnees that the temple and city must be rebuilt in preparation for the coming Messianic age.

1:18-21 ***Four horns:*** The horns were symbols of that which brings destruction. The horns were symbols of four empires that had already inflicted great harm on the people of God. Though it is difficult to determine who the four horns represent, they would at least figuratively refer to all unbelieving nations that formerly afflicted Israel. The nations of Egypt, Syria, Assyria and Babylon had gone beyond measure in inflicting harm on Israel. Jerusalem and the temple were eventually destroyed by those who afflicted the Israelites. The afflicting nations made every attempt to terminate the existence of the Jewish race from history. ***Four craftsmen:*** The people who had afflicted God's people would be terrified by the craftsmen. The horns inflicted ruin on the people and Jerusalem. However, the craftsmen would inflict panic in the hearts of Israel's enemies. They would do so by rebuilding of the temple and city, and the identification of Israel as a race of people with whom God had a special covenant relationship. The rebuilding of the temple and city would signify to the unbelieving world that God had fulfilled the prophecies concerning the reestablishment of His people in the land. While all those who had inflicted harm on Israel were gone as nations, Israel was being reestablished as a nation at the time of Zechariah's ministry. Zechariah was building their hope for the future.

Chapter 2

2:1-5 This second vision adds to the significance of the first. The first vision was a promise that the city would be rebuilt. This vision is of a young man who goes forth to measure the limits to which the city will be built. In this vision, the one with the measuring line was thinking of measuring Jerusalem according to its former state of existence. He was mistaken, for the past Jerusalem would not determine the limits of the new. Thus an angel was set forth in order to tell the one with the measuring line that the new Jerusalem would have no boundaries. It would be an unwalled city with God as its protector. ***Without walls:*** Walls were built around cities by men in order to protect themselves from attacking armies. But in the reconstructed new Jerusalem, God would be the wall of His people. They would not need to fear any nation that would attempt to destroy them. The vision goes beyond the physical Jerusalem that was rebuilt by the returnees. Zechariah carried their minds into the future, to the new Jerusalem of the Messianic age (See Gl 4:26). Reference was to the house of God, the church, that would be populated with people from all nations of the world (Rv 7:9). This spiritual Jerusalem would never be destroyed by the nations as the physical Jerusalem was by the Babylonians (See Dn 2:44; 7:13,14).

2:6-9 At the conclusion of the vision, there are two appeals. The first was to the exiles who were still in Babylon (vss 6-9), and the second was to the exiles who inhabited Jerusalem and Judah (vss 10-13). ***Come forth:*** There were still a great number of Jews living in the land of their former captors. This is an appeal to them to come out of the land of the north, the land of their captors. It is an appeal that they too return to the land in order to identify again the Israel of God. ***I have spread you:*** When the Jews were taken into the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, they were scattered from Ethiopia to India (See Et 1:1; 3:8,12-14; 8:5,9). God thus called for these captives to return in order to reside under His protection in the land of Palestine. The reason for God's plea that they return was to make sure that a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel take up residence in Palestine in order to identify again the Israel of God. In order that the prophecies to the fathers be fulfilled concerning the Blessing, a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel had to be reestablished in the land (See comments Gn 12:1-3).

2:10-13 The second appeal was to Zion. God would come in order to dwell among His people. The presence of the temple was God's symbol to the nations that He was dwelling among His people. However, the statements in this context took the Jews' minds to something that was greater than the temple. Reference was to the church of God's people in which He dwells through the Spirit. ***Many nations will be joined to the Lord:*** The context goes beyond the restoration of physical Israel. Reference was to the Messianic age, to the church unto which all nations would be invited (See comments Rm 9:22-26; Ep 2:11-22; 1 Pt 2:9,10). ***The Lord ... will choose Jerusalem again:*** There was a literal choosing again of physical Jerusalem. The choosing of literal Jerusalem indicated to the nations that God had again selected and returned His heritage from among the nations. However, the words of Zechariah take us beyond a reference to the repentant remnant of the Jews who returned to Palestine. Zechariah looked to the time when God would choose out of this world those of all nations who would compose the new Jerusalem, the church of our Lord. They would be chosen out of the world through their obedience to the gospel (See comments 1 Th 2:13; 2 Th 2:14). The new Jerusalem would be composed of the called who would eventually be called out of this world for eternal dwelling (See comments Ep 1).

Chapter 3

3:1-5 In order for the former visions to be fulfilled, God's people in Judah had to be cleansed. God had promised that He would dwell with His people. But before this could happen, the people had to be cleansed. Since the priests had formerly allowed the apostasy of the Israelite nation to take place (Ez 22:26), then the cleansing of the nation started with the cleansing of Joshua, the high priest. In this scene of the visions, Joshua is the representative for the people. ***Satan:*** Satan is the accuser of all men (Jb 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Rv 12:10). He is such because all men are sinners (Rm 3:9,10,23). ***Plucked out of the fire:*** God's people had been plucked out of captivity and returned to the land. God would not allow Satan to accuse them any longer (See Rm 8:33). Since God had plucked His people out of the nations to which they had been scattered because of captivity, He would not allow them to go back into captivity. ***Filthy garments:*** Joshua's clothes illustrated the guilt of their sin (See Is 4:4; 64:6). By God's grace, however, he was given new and luxurious garments to wear. His people would be adorned as a bride before the bridegroom. ***Turban:*** See Ex 28:36-38.

3:6-10 The ministry of Joshua as the high priest stood for more than his representation of the people before God, and through whom God would minister to the people. He and his companions, the priests, were prophetic of the Branch that was to come. Joshua and the priests, therefore, were a wondrous sign of that which was to come. They thus must be obedient to the commandments of God (Dt 8:6; 10:12; Ps 128:1). They must maintain their work as priests for the people until the coming of the Branch. They must manifest a spirit of obedience. ***Right of access:*** If Joshua and his fellow priests maintained their function, they would have the right to stand with those who stood before God. ***My Servant:*** Isaiah often referred to the Messiah as the Servant of God (Is 42:1; 49:6; 52:13; 53:11). The Messiah to come would be the humble and obedient servant to the spiritual needs of humanity (At 3:13,26; 4:27,30; 8:30-35; 1 Pt 2:21-25). ***The Branch:*** See comments 6:12,13. Without the article, the literal translation of the Hebrew word would be "shoot" or "sprout." The Branch would sprout forth from Israel. He would become the cornerstone in the future upon which God would build His people (See comments Mt 16:18,19; 1 Pt 2:4,5). The Branch would offer Himself and cleanse iniquity from the people. He would stand before God as the advocate of the people (1 Jn 2:1). ***Stone:*** The foundation stone had been laid for the rebuilding of the temple. Prophetically, the foundation stone was representative of God's building of His spiritual temple,

the church, that would be built by the Messiah (See comments Mt 16:18,19; compare Is 28:16). ***Seven eyes:*** Reference is to the complete awareness of God throughout the world in order to providentially care for His people and carry out His eternal purpose through His people. ***Engrave:*** God would do all that was necessary in order to beautify His work for a place of honor. ***Remove the iniquity:*** The immediate reference would be to the day of atonement that would be conducted once a year when the temple was completed (See Lv 16:21,30,34). However, in this context, reference goes beyond the day of atonement, to the complete atonement made by the Christ to come (Hb 9:26). Once the offering of the Eternal Lamb of God was made, the day of atonement would no longer exist among the people of God. ***In that day ... invite ... his neighbor:*** The Messianic age would be the time when the mission of the Jews would change. They would go forth to invite others to the blessings of the Branch (See comments Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16; compare comments Is 3:1-3).

Chapter 4

4:1-7 This vision manifested the significance of Zerubbabel as the civil leader of the people. ***Awakened me:*** Zechariah had evidently fallen into a deep meditation concerning the meaning of the previous visions (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). ***Lampstand:*** See Ex 37:17-24. This was representative of the restored Jewish community. ***Seven lamps:*** The lamps, or lights, of the lampstand were the eyes of the omnipresent God who was aware of His people and their welfare. ***Two olive trees:*** These two olive trees continually supplied oil to the lampstand in order that the seven lights continue to burn. These two olive trees represented Zerubbabel, the civil leader, and Joshua, the religious leader. These two represented the offices of civil and religious leadership among the people. Zerubbabel and Joshua were God's representatives among the Jews in order that their offices continue until the coming of the Branch. ***Word ... to Zerubbabel:*** This message to a civil leader should be remembered by those who would lead. Zerubbabel must remember that his leadership should not be by the power of his abilities and position. His leadership must be based in what the Spirit of God supplies. Successful leadership of God's people is based on the power of a Spirit-filled man who has submitted himself to the will of God (See comments At 6:1-5). ***O great mountain:*** All the fears and opposition that had come upon the people in rebuilding the temple and city would be overcome by the power of the Spirit working through the spiritual leadership of Zerubbabel. (Concerning the opposition the Jews faced when they returned to the land, see comments Er and Ne). ***Bring forth the capstone:*** When they finished the task of building the temple by laying the capstone, then they would realize that it was God who empowered them to complete the work. God's work in our lives is often not recognized until after we have struggled through trials. ***Grace:*** Through the grace of God, they were able to complete the task. Therefore, they would give credit to God for the work. They would recognize that they could not have accomplished the task of rebuilding both the temple and the walls of the city of Jerusalem without the help of God.

4:8-10 ***You will know:*** When the work was completed, they would then realize that God had spoken through Zechariah. ***Who has despised:*** All those who doubted in the beginning of the construction would rejoice when the temple was completed. Their faith in God's work through them would grow as a result of their completion of the temple. As we look back on the things that God has done for us, we have confidence to continue with those things in which we are presently involved. We are assured that God is working in our lives even as we labor every day. God works through His people in order to bring about the desired end that will bring glory to His name (Ph 1:6).

4:11-14 ***Two anointed ones:*** This would be Joshua who was representative of the high priests (3:1,3,9) and Zerubbabel, who would be representative of the civil rulers (4:7,10).

Chapter 5

5:1-4 The two visions of this chapter are in reference to the purging of sin from the community of God. The flying scroll pictures the judgment of God upon individuals who steal and swear falsely (perjurers) by the name of God. The woman in the basket pictures the purging of the culture of wickedness from the community. ***Flying scroll:*** The scroll originated from God, and thus judgment was coming forth from God upon the thieves and liars. ***Cubits:*** The measurement of the scroll may have symbolized the many curses that were written on it. However, since the measurements here correspond to the size of the holy place in the tabernacle, the symbolism may be that men cannot measure the extent and results of their own sin. The measure of men's sins must be according to the measurements of God (Compare 1 Sm 2:3; see comments Rm 7:7-12). ***The whole land:*** Since the Jews were given the oracles of God (Rm 3:2), then they would be judged by the Old Testament law (Compare Rm 2:12-15). ***Will be cut off:*** The land will be cleansed of every thief and perjurer. The message of the vision was that no house should be overlooked in the purging of thieves and liars from the land. The judgment would remain on the house in which it entered until there was repentance, and thus cleansing.

5:5-11 ***Woman in a basket:*** The term "ephah" was used in older translations for basket, but the meaning is in reference to the container, not the weight. ***Woman who sits inside the basket:*** In the vision, the symbol of a woman in the basket represented the wickedness of the land. She is wickedness personified. She is contained in the basket, and then figuratively transported to Babylon (Shinar) by the symbol of two other women. ***Two women:*** It was the work of the women to use baskets in their daily living. Thus the angel uses women as the symbolic characters that would carry out the actions of the vision. Reference here is not to angels. It was the angel who was telling the vision to Zechariah. The symbolism was to women whose task it was to carry the basket of wickedness to Babylon. The woman in the basket is the personification of sin, and thus sin is taken out of the land. Sin was taken from the land of God's people to the land that was representative of sin and idolatry. In the Messianic age of the church, sin would be banished from God's people through the cleansing blood of Jesus (See comments Rm 8:1-4; 1 Jn 1:9).

Chapter 6

6:1-8 This is the eighth and last vision. It is a vision of judgment that is poured out against Babylon. ***Four chariots:*** These great war chariots came with strength from between possibly Mount Zion and Mount Olives. The chariots were symbolic of divine judgment that was poured out on the world. ***Red:*** There is no certainty concerning the symbolic significance concerning the colors of the horses. ***Four spirits:*** These are four angels of God who are sent forth to the four corners of the earth (See Ps 104:4; Hb 1:7). ***The north country:*** The black horses were sent to the north country, the direction from which all invading armies formerly came into Palestine. Reference in this vision was to Babylon. The chariot with the white horses was sent with the chariot that was drawn by the black horses. ***The south country:*** The dappled gray horses were sent to Egypt. It is not mentioned as to where the red horses were sent. Some believe that the horses of verse 7 were the red horses that were sent throughout the earth. ***Appeased My spirit:*** The word "spirit" is here used to represent the wrath of God (See Pv 16:32). When God's judgment had come upon Babylon, then His wrath was appeased. Once Babylon had been punished for her calamity that she had brought on God's people, then justice had been served.

CROWNING OF THE KING

6:9-15 A delegation of Jews had recently come from Babylon. Zechariah was asked to receive the gift from this delegation. He was to use the gold and silver to fashion a crown that would be used in a coronation ceremony for the office of the high priest. The coronation would be for Joshua, whose function as a high priest would be indicative of the work of the Branch who would come. Joshua's coronation, and the placing of the crown on his head, would in effect make him both priest and king. Since the coronation of Joshua would empower him as such, then the coronation was prophetic of what was to transpire in verses 12 & 13. ***The Man whose name is the Branch:*** In verses 12 & 13 God revealed a very significant prophecy concerning the Messianic age that was yet to come in the history of Israel. In this prophecy Zechariah stated that the Messiah would be a priest while He ruled on His throne. The prophecy was of Jesus who would fulfill it in every detail. In Hebrews 4:14, the Hebrew writer stated that we now have a great high priest who has passed into the heavens (Hb 5:6; see 7:17,21-28). The New Testament clearly states that Jesus is now that priest. Therefore, the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father. In Hebrews 4:14, the verb "has passed" is a Greek perfect participle. It thus expresses action that was completed in the past, but with emphasis on the continued result of that past action. Therefore, Jesus became our high priest when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. Hebrews 8:1 states that Jesus is now our high priest who is at the right hand of God in heaven. Jesus is still at the right hand of the Father. He is still there today functioning as our High Priest. Jesus continues with this "unchangeable priesthood" unto this day (See Hb 7:3,23,24). Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. When Jesus ascended to the Father, He became our high priest on His heavenly throne. He thus reigns as King and functions as a high priest on David's throne in heaven. In the context of the present priesthood of Jesus on His throne in heaven, Hebrews 8:4 is a very significant statement. *"For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law."* Jesus cannot be a priest on this earth. If He were to return to reside on the earth, He would have to give up His high priesthood. Zechariah prophesied that Jesus would be a high priest on His throne (Zc 6:13). The Hebrew writer stated that Jesus cannot be a priest on this earth. The correlation between the prophecy of Zechariah and its fulfillment is in the fact that Jesus cannot be a priest on earth, and thus reign on this earth as a king. Consider the prophecy of Zechariah 6:12,13 and Hebrews 8:4 from another perspective. Zechariah prophesied that the Branch (Jesus) would be a priest on His throne. The Hebrew writer stated that Jesus is now our high priest, which priesthood is from heaven (See Hb 4:14; 8:1). Therefore, the throne upon which Jesus is our high priest is in heaven. The ruling of Jesus upon His throne that was prophesied by Zechariah, is now taking place, but it is taking place in heaven. It was never meant to take place on this earth. Thus in the future Jesus is not coming in order to become our high priest on this earth. Neither is He coming in order to be a king on this earth. He is coming to take home those He has redeemed (See comments 1 Th 4:13-18).

Chapter 7

QUESTIONS CONCERNING FASTING

7:1-3 This event transpired about two years after the visions. ***Chisleu:*** This was the Babylonian name for the period of time that corresponds to the time of our November/December. The occasion for these events was the arrival in Jerusalem of a representative group of the existing exiles who came to inquire of the Lord and to ask concerning the continuation of the fast in the fifth month. This fasting had taken place throughout the captivity. ***The prophets:*** Haggai and Zechariah. ***Weep ... abstain:*** Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians. Before its destruction, the captives initiated a fast in the fifth month in reference to the peril that Jerusalem faced and eventually endured (2 Kg 25:8,9). Since the temple was now in the process of reconstruction, the question was naturally asked if they should terminate their fast for its reconstruction.

7:4-7 ***Seventh month:*** This was a fasting called for by the people because of the assassination of Gedaliah who had been appointed governor of Palestine by Nebuchadnezzar (See 2 Kg 25:25; Jr 41:1-10). The fasts of both the fifth and seventh months were fasts that were instituted by the people, not God. The fasts, therefore, were based on their own desires, for both represented fasts in reference to the loss of their city and their rulers. The fasts were not over the loss of their faithfulness to God. Their fast had nothing to do with repentance. ***Former prophets:*** Instead of fasting in repentance to take heed to the call of the prophets to repent, they were fasting over something that they had lost. ***When Jerusalem was inhabited:*** They should have been fasting while Jerusalem was still

standing in order that they turn to God. They did not start the fasting until it was too late.

7:8-14 In answer to those who had come to inquire concerning the time of fasting, Zechariah reminded them of the spiritual condition and attitudes of those who lived before the captivity. God reveals this message through Zechariah in order that they not fall after the same spirit of disobedience that was characteristic of their fathers. ***Execute true justice:*** God had demanded of those before the exile that they practice justice, mercy and compassion (Hs 6:6; Am 5:24). In verse 10 God reminded them of the wicked social oppression of widows, orphans and the poor (See Mc 3:1-3). ***Turned a stubborn shoulder:*** Because of their defiant attitude toward God, and their desire to maintain their luxurious life-style on the backs of the poor, they showed disrespect to God's prophets who condemned such wicked behavior. They turned their backs on those who preached the truth concerning their wicked society (See At 7:51). They were hard headed because of their hard hearts. So because of their defiant spirit, God unleashed His judgments upon them as a whirlwind. He scattered them among the nations in order that they be disciplined. With the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, He made the land of Palestine desolate of Israelites.

Chapter 8

8:1-8 The material of this chapter is a continued answer to the delegation that came asking concerning the fasts (7:1-3). The people recognized that there were many Jews still living in the land of their captors. The local returnees were discouraged. There was local hostility toward them. Added to their discouragement was a drought in the land (Hg 1:11). This message here was one of hope. It was a message of hope both for the local returnees, as well as for those who were still in the lands of their former captors. ***I was zealous:*** God had not forgotten His people in captivity, though He had scattered them throughout the nations because of their apostasy. But because of His zealous commitment to His people, He worked in the affairs of the nations in order that they be restored to the land. ***City of truth:*** As the message of Zechariah went forth to those who were still in the lands of their captors, they needed to hear that God had returned with favor on Jerusalem. The message needed to go out that truth, not the lies of the past, had been restored to the society of God's people. ***The mountain:*** The people must understand that God returned to the city to the point that He would bless those who returned. ***Old men:*** There would be no more captivity. People could return and grow old in the land. ***Full of boys and girls:*** Normal life was restored. The land was now a place where one could bring up a family and carry on with normal life. ***Marvelous in the eyes of the remnant:*** It may have been unbelievable that God would restore the land to a small remnant of discouraged Jews. But God could do such, for it was no great thing for God to work such sociological miracles among men. It was a small matter for God to work among the nations in order to bring about His eternal purpose in Israel. ***I will save:*** The remnant had to understand that the restoration of the people to the land was the work of God. He wanted them to come from the regions to which they had been taken captive in order to repopulate the land. God wanted Israel to be reestablished in order to fulfill the promises He had made to the fathers.

8:9-13 ***Let your hands be strong:*** The people needed to overcome their discouragement. They needed to understand that God was again working among them in order to accomplish His eternal purposes. Those who listened to the prophets concerning the rebuilding of the temple, and were now discouraged, needed to resume the work. They needed to cease fearing the opposition of the Samaritans in the land who had discouraged their work (Er 4:4). ***As in the former days***: In the former days before the captivity, God disciplined the people through famine and pestilence because of their rebellion. God brought calamity on the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel in order to stimulate repentance. But now that they had repented and returned to the land, God would bless all that they would do. As a people, He would prosper their labors in their fields. The rebuilding of the temple was a sign of their identity among the nations, and thus God wanted them to continue with the reconstruction efforts.

8:14-17 ***As I thought to punish:*** God punished their forefathers because they had digressed into a society of injustice and oppression among themselves. However, God promised that He would bless them for restoring justice and mercy. In this text He describes the fundamental social practices that must be restored and maintained. These are eternal ethics that must prevail through any society.

8:18-23 This would be the climax of God's answer to the delegation that came asking questions concerning the continuation of the fasts (See 7:2,3). God's answer was that they needed to terminate their fasts that they had instituted over the former calamity of Israel. Their fasts needed to change to joyous feasts for all that God was doing among them. ***Many people ... will come to seek the Lord:*** The joyous social atmosphere should be so great among the returnees that it would attract people from all nations to come and be a part of such a joyous group of people. The joyous character of God's people should be so great that it attracts others to be a part of the community of God (See comments Jn 13:34,35; 1 Pt 3:15). The joy of believers should motivate others to worship God (Compare 2 Co 4:15). As a rejoicing spirit encouraged those of Zechariah's generation to come and worship the Lord, so Christians should always rejoice in the Lord for the same reason (See comments Ph 4:4).

Prophetic History Of God's People (9:1 – 14:21)

Outline: (1) The burden of Judah's enemies (9:1 – 11:17), (2) The burden of Judah (12:1 – 13:9), (3) The triumphal Jerusalem (14:1-21)

Chapter 9

THE BURDEN OF JUDAH'S ENEMIES

Chapters 9-14 would be the natural final note of encouragement to the returnees. Throughout the former prophets who ministered before the captivity, God pronounced that great calamity would come upon those nations who aided in the calamities that befell God's people. God thus pronounced

on them the judgment of annihilation as nations. All except Egypt, would cease to exist. In order to encourage Zechariah's generation, they needed to be reminded of the prophecies concerning the punishment of the nations about which the former prophets spoke, for Zechariah's generation was experiencing the fulfillment of the prophecies. They received great encouragement from the following prophecies that were stated many years before as they, in their lifetime, experienced the fulfillment of those prophecies. The events that had taken place among the nations, and would transpire throughout the history of the restored Israel, would culminate in the coming of the Branch and the establishment of the kingdom reign of King Jesus when He ascended to the right hand of God (See comments Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). Once King Jesus was seated at the right hand of God in order to reign over all things, then God would bring physical Israel to a close with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The remainder of Zechariah's messages in the latter part of his life deal with revelations concerning the end of the Jewish age in Christ.

9:1-8 These messages came to Zechariah in his latter years. The temple had been rebuilt and Jerusalem reconstructed. Now that the symbols of the identity of Israel were reestablished in the land, it was a time to remind the people that God had fulfilled His former prophecies concerning the demise of the nations around them. The Jews would again suffer amidst conflicts that would rage between the people of Tyre and Syria to the north, and Askelon, Gaza and Ekron to the south. But they would not suffer because of their sin. They must understand that God was still working in the international affairs of the nations, and thus they would eventually be victorious in the consummation of Israel in the coming of the Messiah (See comments Dn). They must endure as victims of the international turmoil that would exist among the nations until the coming of the Messiah. What the Jews of Zechariah's day did not understand, was that the fulfillment of the promises to the Jewish people would lead to peace in the new Jerusalem. However, the peace would come as a result of the loss of those things they considered most precious concerning their identity as Jews. The land promised to Abraham would come to an end (Gn 12:1-3). The inhabitants of the new Jerusalem, the church, would no longer be concerned about possessions of land (See comments At 4:32-37). All prophecies concerning Israel being a great physical nation as the stars of heaven would have been fulfilled by the time the Messiah came. Thus the Jews would no longer need to maintain genealogies in order to maintain their family inheritances of the land. All physical aspects for maintaining the identity of God's people would vanish away as the new Jerusalem would be identified by one's personal and spiritual relationship with God. The identity of God's people through land possession, genealogy, temples and cities would all pass away in Christ (See comments Jn 4:21-24). ***Damascus:*** God was watching the movements of Syria. ***Tyre:*** Though Tyre would seek to enrich her coffers with gold and silver, God would strike her with destruction. This happened at the hands of Alexander the Great who destroyed the city after a seven-month siege against it. ***Ashkelon ... Gaza ... Ekron:*** These cities and region were south of Tyre and Sidon. They were on the route of Alexander the Great as he moved along the western coast of Palestine to Egypt. These cities were easily conquered by the Greeks as the Grecian Empire spread south, and then to the east in the 4th century B.C. From 336 to 323 B.C., Alexander the Great moved across the ancient world, conquering one nation after another. In his conquest of nations, he was unwittingly preparing the way for the propagation of the message of the Messiah, for Alexander spread the Greek language throughout the regions he conquered. Through the medium of the Greek language, the New Testament documents would be written and circulated throughout the ancient world. ***Take away his blood:*** In being converted to the faith of Israel, they would no longer ritualistically eat blood. ***He will be for our God:*** Those who would remain of the Philistines would become proselytes to the Jew's faith. ***Ekron as a Jebusite:*** This Philistine city would convert to the extent that it would be as Jerusalem (Jebus), a center of faith. The Jewish historian, Josephus, affirmed that this happened in history. ***I will camp around My house:*** While the surrounding cities and nations would be decimated through international conflicts during the interbiblical period, God reassured His people that they would be protected by Him. Though they would reside in the land that was occupied by foreign nations, they as a people would not be scattered throughout the world as they were during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

9:9-10 ***Your King is coming to you:*** In view of the pronounced fulfillment of this statement in Luke 19:37-40, there can be no question that this was a prophecy of the coming of King Jesus. All that transpired from the time of Zechariah and throughout the interbiblical period, led up to the glorious Messianic age. ***Riding on a donkey:*** The Messiah would not come as a warrior king riding upon a horse for war, which was typical of physical kingdoms of this world. He would be riding humbly upon a donkey, the animal that was used in times of peace. He would ride on a beast of burden, bearing the sins of the world. ***I will cut off the chariot:*** He would be the Prince of Peace, for within His kingdom there would be no military warfare (Is 2:4). His kingdom of peace would include all Israel from Ephraim, the northern kingdom, to Jerusalem, representing the southern kingdom of Israel. Peace would extend from the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea, from the Euphrates River into all the world (See comments Is 9:5-9).

9:11-13 ***Blood of the covenant:*** Israel had lived in captivity in previous years. If it were not for the blood of the covenant that would come through the Messiah, they would have been left to destruction. But she was delivered as prisoners, and thus returned to the stronghold of God's protection. ***Against your sons, O Greece:*** Throughout the interbiblical period the Jews would suffer from the expansion of the Greek Empire under the leadership of Alexander the Great. After his death, Alexander's four generals would take possession of his kingdom. The Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucidae to the north of Palestine would struggle against one another, with the Jews caught in the middle of the conflict (See intro. to Dn). As the prophet Daniel gave hope to the Jews who were caught in the middle of these international affairs, Zechariah

here reveals his encouraging hope for the people of God. The Messiah would come forth and consume the nations, including Greece (See comments Dn 2 & 7).

9:14-17 Verse 13 introduces us to the content of verses 14-17. ***The Lord will be seen over them:*** Victory is promised, but the victory is of God. God used His people to accomplish the victory, for from the Jews would come the Messiah who would reign over all things (See comments Ep 1:20-23). At the time of Zechariah, the international turmoil that would affect the Jews in Palestine had already started. Sardis was burned by the Greeks in 499 B.C. The battle of Marathon occurred in 490 B.C. The victory of the Greeks over Xerxes of Persia at Salamis, Plataea and Mycale occurred in 480/479 B.C. The Greek Empire was in its early beginnings, and eventually would come to its climax as an empire under the kingship of Alexander the Great. When Alexander died, the conflict over Palestine would continue through the rivalry between the Ptolemies and the Seleucidae. Antiochus Epiphanes would rise among the Seleucidae, and inflict great suffering on the Jews. However, during the period of the Hasmoneans, the Maccabean leaders, especially, Judas, would rid Judah of the Seleucidae and cleanse the altar in Jerusalem (See comments in intro. to Dn). ***God will save them:*** What is important to remember from the prophecy of Zechariah, is the fact that God was working in all these affairs in order to bring His people to the coming of the Messiah. God would defend His people. The enemies of the Jews would be subdued.

Chapter 10

10:1-5 In view of the preceding survival of God's people throughout the tempestuous years of conflict, they are encouraged to ask of God who would bless them in the land. They are thus encouraged to ask of God for the rain that would give increase to their crops. ***Idols ... vanity:*** In their past history, their idol worship led them astray as they depended on themselves in requesting help from those idol gods that they had created after their own imagination. ***Diviners have seen a lie:*** Their lack of trust and knowledge of God led them to trust in those people who knew nothing about that which existed beyond the minds of men. They thus spoke lies to the people when they claimed to be speaking for some supernatural existence or being that they had only imagined. ***Anger ... against the shepherds:*** Not only were the people led astray because of their desire to follow after false prophets and diviners, but also because the rulers and kings led them astray (See comments Ez 34). ***His majestic horse:*** Judah was the victory horse of God through which He would be victorious. The Maccabean leaders came out of Judah in order to deliver the Jews from the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes. But the statements of prophecy in this context probably have Messianic reference to the Branch of Judah who would come forth from Judah in order to reign over all things (Gn 49:10; 1 Co 15:25; Ph 2:5-11; 1 Tm 6:15).

10:6-12 ***I will bring them again:*** At the time of Zechariah's ministry, Bible interpreters must keep in mind that there were still Jews who would return to the land of Palestine from their captivity. The first group of exiles returned in 536 B.C. There was another group that came back in 497 B.C. And finally, a third group returned in 444 B.C. The return of exiles, therefore, took place over a period of 142 years (See comments Er & Ne). Zechariah's statements in this context were to encourage the continued return of the exiles to the land in preparation for the Messiah to come. ***I will whistle for them:*** God would whistle for them as a shepherd whistles for his flock to come (See Is 7:18). ***I have redeemed them:*** God worked among the nations in order to raise up Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire, who allowed the first group of exiles to return in 536 B.C. There were other exiles to come. They would come back from the lands of captivity even after the death of Zechariah. We would assume, therefore, that these statements were made by Zechariah in order to encourage more of the exiles to return to the land of their possession. ***Pass through the sea:*** In their return, they would not be hindered, for they would pass through all obstacles as the nation of Israel passed through the Red Sea in their flight from Egyptian captivity (Is 11:15,16). The Euphrates River would not hinder their coming from former territories of the Assyrian Empire.

Chapter 11

11:1-3 We would assume that in the midst of great prophecies concerning the restoration of the Jews to the land of Palestine and the coming of the Messiah, that there would also be prophecies concerning the termination of God's use of the Israelite nation in order to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. The termination of national Israel took place in Christ (See comments Gl 3:23-26). Once Israel was brought to Christ, then the Old Testament law and national Israel were taken away (See comments Gl 3:21-25). In Zechariah's time, God encouraged the rebuilding of the temple. But the temple also would come to an end when its use by God ended. The Messianic age was a glorious hope for Israel, but we would expect that God would forewarn His people concerning the end of the Old Testament covenant and law with Israel once it was fulfilled (See comments Jr 31:31-34; Mt 5:17,18). This chapter, therefore, is a prophecy that would be opposite the picture of hope that was given in chapter 10 with the glorious coming of the Messiah. The picture here is of tragedy. It is a picture of the tragedy of those who rejected the Messiah. While chapter 10 focused on the blessings of the coming Messiah, this chapter focuses on the tragic consequences of rejecting the Messiah when He came. There would be destruction again of the temple and Jerusalem. The blessing of the termination of Israel in Christ would to the national Jews be a tragedy. The symbols for these coming events are taken from the calamities that befell Israel in their apostasy in the past. As with the destruction that came from the north through the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions and devastation of the land, so there would be a time when destruction would again come from the north. The occasion for destruction that is prophesied in this context would come upon those who would reject the Messiah. The prophecy is thus of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman Empire (See comments Mt 24).

11:4-6 ***Their own shepherds:*** The problem that prevailed

during the period leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple before 586 B.C. would again prevail in Israel. The leaders of Israel would again lead the people astray (See comments Ez 34; Mk 7:1-9). Zechariah is here called on to be an allegorical reference to the Good Shepherd who was to come. The Good Shepherd would lead the people to God. However, there would come those shepherds who would lead the people astray after themselves (Compare Jr 23:1-8; Ez 34; 37:24-28). ***Do not pity them:*** The scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' time had little concern for the people. They were concerned only with their own prosperity and power (See comments Lk 16:18). The irony was in the fact that those who were to lead and deliver the people to the Good Shepherd were those who would eventually restrain the sheep from going to the Good Shepherd. ***I will not deliver them:*** God would not deliver the defiant out of the hands of the Romans. He had delivered the captives out of their Babylonian captivity, but He would not deliver those who rejected the Messiah. He would give them over to doom because of their rejection of King Jesus, just as He had given Israel over to the Assyrians and Babylonians.

11:7-9 ***Grace ... Unity:*** The allegory continues with Zechariah being the obedient shepherd of the doomed flock. The staff named Grace symbolized the favor that God extended toward His people. The one named Unity symbolized the union between Judah and Israel, thus representing the whole house of Israel. ***Cut off three shepherds:*** The shepherds became as in the days when they led the flock astray before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. ***What is to die, let it die:*** The labor and care of the shepherd was not appreciated. Therefore, the flock must reap the consequences of rejecting all that God had done for His people by sending them the Savior. The people of Israel were thus to be terminated as a special race of people in a covenant relationship with God. God turned national Israel over to itself, which subsequently led to the destruction of the nation in Palestine in A.D. 70.

11:10-12 ***Break the covenant:*** The covenant and law were fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah (Mt 5:17,18). What the Jews failed to understand was that their special covenant with God was only the means to an end. The end was Christ. Once Christ came, then the covenant was terminated (See comments Jr 31:31-34; Rm 7:1-4; Cl 2:14; Hb 8). Grace for the preservation of national Israel was terminated when grace for spiritual Israel was poured out through Jesus Christ (Compare Ti 2:11). ***The poor:*** Those who were poor in spirit received the Messiah (See comments Mt 5:3-11). Those who were rebellious did not receive him (Jn 1:11). ***Thirty pieces of silver:*** As the shepherd, Zechariah asked for his wages for his work of shepherding the flock. The people determined to give him the price of an injured slave (See Ex 21:32).

11:13,14 To this point in the text, Zechariah was the representative of the Lord. Now the Lord speaks directly. ***Throw it to the potter:*** Though Zechariah thought that the price of thirty pieces of silver was sufficient, the Lord said to discard the menial wage. The miserly amount measured their value of the Lord's shepherding of them as a flock. When considering all that God had done for Israel throughout their history, the thirty pieces of silver for His wages as their shepherd was insulting. Throughout their history, Israel had been plagued with worthless shepherds (Ez 34). But God had been a good shepherd to them, sending even His Son who was the Good Shepherd on earth (Jn 10:15). Nevertheless, He was rejected and betrayed for the price of a injured slave (Mt 26:15). By the time of the coming of Jesus, the religious leaders were of the same character as their forefathers who had led Israel into apostasy, and subsequently into destruction (Compare Jn 8:44). ***Break the brotherhood:*** In Christ, the existence of national Israel as a united people who brought the world to Christ, was terminated (See comments Gl 3:23-26; compare Hb 11:32-40).

11:15-17 ***Worthless shepherd:*** Zechariah had already taken the part of the good shepherd. At this time he was to take the part of the foolish, or worthless shepherd. Being rejected by national Israel, the Good Shepherd would turn the Jews over to the worthless shepherd. The worthless shepherd represented the Roman Empire that would ravage the flock. In the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, over one million Jews were killed. The remainder were sold into captivity throughout the Roman Empire. But God would eventually bring judgment on the Roman Empire. The city of Rome fell in A.D. 476, thus ending another empire that had inflicted calamity on God's people.

Chapter 12
THE BURDEN OF JUDAH

12:1-6 ***The Lord ... lays the foundation of the earth:*** As in His message to Job, so here the encouragement is given in the sense that the God who could create all things can surely protect those who put their trust in Him. There would eventually be a destruction of Judah and Jerusalem to come in A.D. 70. Until that time, those who were sons of Abraham by faith, and who were obedient to the call of the Messiah, must trust in the Lord. Throughout the termination of national Israel, they would need to see God working in order to give birth to and preserve the new Jerusalem, the spiritual Israel of God. But until the coming of the Messiah, national Israel would go through great turmoil during the interbiblical period. ***Spirit of man within him:*** God is the father of our spirits (Hb 12:9). He created our spirits to indwell our bodies. ***Cup of reeling:*** The nations would gather in order to drink from the cup of Jerusalem, thinking that it contained sweet wine. However, when they drank of the cup, they would reel from the calamity that God would bring upon them (Compare Is 51:22). God would not allow His people to be overcome until the day set for the outpouring of His Spirit. Once the Spirit had been poured out, then national Israel that rejected the Messiah would be terminated. ***Heavy stone:*** The metaphor is from men's efforts to remove a heavy stone. In their efforts to move the stone, they would discover that the stone was a tremendous burden to remove. There would be much grief among the nations in their efforts to remove the stone of Jerusalem, the representation of the people of God. ***I will open my eyes on the house of Judah:*** God would look with favor on His people. He would look with favor on Jerusalem until the new

Jerusalem was brought forth (See comments Rv 21). When the new Jerusalem was brought forth, then the old was terminated. ***Firepan ... torch:*** These two metaphors explain that the rulers of Judah would participate in the continuation of Jerusalem. They would be as a small fire (firepan) that would set an entire forest on fire. They would be as a burning torch thrown into dry sheaves. Physical Jerusalem would struggle until the spiritual Jerusalem was brought forth (See comments Mt 13:36-43).

12:7-9 ***The glory:*** The survival of the people would be to the glory of God, not to the glory of the people. The Jews had forgotten that all was about bringing glory to God, not about bringing glory to themselves as a people. ***House of David:*** Jesus was born of the house of David in order to reign on the throne of David from heaven (See comments At 2:22-36). The house of David would thus survive until the Seed came forth from the seedline of David. ***As God:*** Jesus was the Son of God who was born of the house of David. ***Seek to destroy all the nations:*** The terminology is not absolute as in reference to the nations that fought against national Israel throughout their history. God did destroy the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. But those who would come against the spiritual Jerusalem, the church, would be attacked by the gospel of Jesus. God would seek to destroy the hostility of the nations who would come against His people through the preaching of the gospel.

12:10-14 ***Pour ... Spirit:*** See comments Jl 2:28-32. At the time when national Israel was destined to come to a close, God would send forth His Spirit. ***Look on Me whom they have pierced:*** The Jews had metaphorically pierced God through their rebellion against Him throughout their history. Their piercing in rebellion eventually came to a climax when a soldier pierced the rejected Son of God on the cross of Calvary (Rv 1:7). ***They will mourn:*** King Josiah was possibly killed at Hadad Rimmon that was located in the Valley of Megiddo. The people greatly mourned his death. There would also be great mourning over the crucified Christ (Lk 23:48). ***The family ...:*** These leading families would be representative of all families of Israel. At the time Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, the people responded to his message because they mourned over what they had done to Jesus (At 2:36-41).

Chapter 13

13:1-3 ***In that day:*** This day could only be the era of the Messiah, the time of the ekklesia (the church) of our Lord (12:11). The piercing opened a fountain of blessing for the people. The cross of Jesus made available justification for sins (Rm 3:21-26) because of the cleansing of sin through His blood (1 Pt 1:2; 1 Jn 1:7). We are made legally acceptable to God (justification) through the precious blood of Jesus that cleanses us of all sin (sanctification). The apostle Peter announced on the day of Pentecost the means by which the sins of men are cleansed (At 2:38). When thousands obeyed the gospel (At 2:41), the time of refreshing and regeneration came in Israel (At 3:19-21). ***Idols out of the land:*** Speaking from the standpoint of the Jews who were in the land at the time Zechariah ministered these words to the people, there would be a time when idolatry would no longer be a part of those associated with God. Israel put away their idolatry while in captivity. ***Cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land:*** The false prophets and diviners would have no part in the church of the living God. Even if one would presume to speak a new revelation from a spirit, he would be known to be false and a liar in that which he spoke. Those presumptuous speakers who proclaimed declarations that they claimed to be from God would be banned from the Christian community.

13:4-6 ***Hairy garment to deceive:*** The false prophets of old put on these clothes in order to deceive the people into thinking that they were speaking for God. They gave an appearance of being a prophet of God. They dressed as a prophet on the outside, but were actually wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15). ***Wounds:*** If some might inquire concerning the wounds on his body, the false prophet had to confess that they were only the wounds that he had inflicted on himself (See 1 Kg 18:28). The context of these words is not in reference to Christ, but in reference to those who would presumptuously speak for God where God had not spoken. The means by which the people would know if such a one was a false prophet would be to check his statements with the written word of God (See comments At 17:11; 1 Pt 4:11; 2 Jn 9-11).

13:7-9 These words seem to be parallel with the preceding fate of Israel, and thus a continuation of the thoughts of chapter 11. The Good Shepherd is smitten. The rebellious Jews during the end of the ministry of Jesus and before the cross, took part in striking Jesus because they rejected Him (Jn 19:7). ***Sheep will be scattered:*** When Jesus was stricken with rejection at the end of his ministry, in the final hour the disciples were scattered (Mt 26:31). ***I will turn My hand on the little ones:*** Though the disciples would be scattered, God would gather them again (Mt 26:32). ***Two parts ... cut off ... third will be left:*** Jesus came to the Jews, but many rejected Him (Jn 1:11). Those who rejected Him were cut off, and thus died in their sins (Lk 13:3). However, thousands of Jews accepted Him, and thus became the heart of evangelism to go into all nations (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). Those who obeyed the gospel of Jesus gave themselves to God, and thus were claimed by God to be His people.

Chapter 14
THE TRIUMPHAL JERUSALEM

14:1,2 It is certain that if we come to this text with a strictly literal interpretation, we will be confused. In the beauty of metaphors that were taken from the historical background of Jewish history, Zechariah paints a glorious picture of the continued purging of the people of God as they struggled throughout history. The focus, therefore, is not of some grand event that will take place at the end of time, but on the struggles of the new Jerusalem, the church, that was instituted by the coming of the Messiah. It is thus a picture of those who gave themselves in allegiance to the Messiah at the conclusion of chapter 13. The defeat that is mentioned here in the first two verses sets the stage for the deliverance of the remnant of

the faithful in verses 3-5. ***Day of the Lord:*** The use of the Hebrew word *yom* in the context would refer to the "time of the Lord," not to a specific day. It would be the time when the Lord would allow the unbelievers to launch their attack against His people. ***Remnant of the people:*** This would be the remnant of the spiritual Jerusalem that is preserved, and yet faces struggles continually throughout history (See At 14:22; Gl 4:29; 2 Tm 2:3). The world would launch numerous assaults against the spiritual Jerusalem, the church. According to Daniel, such attacks were launched by the "little horn" of the fourth world kingdom (Rome). The saints were given into his hand (Dn 7:21). This persecution by the Roman Empire prevailed against the church for almost two centuries after its establishment in A.D. 30 (Rv 13:7; see comments of Rv). However, the Roman onslaught against the church would not fulfill the extent of Zechariah's prophecy, for attacks would be made against the church throughout history. Nevertheless, a remnant of the church would always survive, as a remnant of Israel survived the captivities (Mc 5:3; Zp 2:9).

14:3-7 ***Fight against those nations:*** Any attack against His people gives God the opportunity to fight for His people (See Hk 3). ***In that day:*** This would be any time in history when God's people would come under attack by unbelievers. God will fight for them in order that a remnant be delivered. No time in history, therefore, would the church go out of existence. ***Mount of Olives:*** Being east of Jerusalem, the figure is that God stands and watches over the new Jerusalem in order to protect her from all enemies. The mountain is divided. Half is moved toward the north and half toward the south, providing a great valley to which the people may flee for safety. In every conflict, God provides a way of escape for His people (1 Co 10:13; 2 Pt 2:9). ***Valley of My mountains:*** The two halves of the divided mountain became the mountains that provide the valley of escape. ***Azel:*** The location of this place is unknown. Reference may be to Beth-ezel that was mentioned by Micah (Mc 1:11). ***Earthquake in the days of Uzziah:*** This traumatic event lingered with the Jews throughout their history (See Am 1:1). ***The Lord my God will come:*** This would be the coming of the Lord in judgment on the persecutors of His people. The coming would mean calamity for the unbelieving persecutors of God's people, but deliverance for the saints. Inspired records of history have revealed only a few times when this occurred. The unbelieving Jews launched great persecution against the church after it was established (At 8:1-4). However, God brought deliverance to the saints in the destruction of Jerusalem and national Israel in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). A personal vendetta was led against Christians by Nero, Caesar of Rome, in the early 60's. But Nero eventually killed himself. At the end of the 1st century, state persecution was launched against the church by the Romans. But the beast of Rome was eventually terminated (See comments Rv 19:11-21). ***There will be no light:*** This would be a time of great distress for the saints (Compare Is 13:10; Jl 2:2,10). ***In evening it will be light:*** Though going through times of despair, there would always be hope, for the Lord would not allow His people to vanish from history (See Jn 14:18; Hb 13:5).

14:8-11 ***Living waters:*** The living waters of salvation would flow from Jerusalem (See comments Jn 4:14; Ez 47:1-12). Regardless of the calamities that would come upon the saints, the living waters of the Savior would always bring forth a continuation of the body of believers (Jn 7:37,38). ***Eastern sea:*** The Dead Sea. ***Western Sea:*** The Mediterranean Sea. ***King over all the earth:*** This statement establishes the time of fulfillment of the prophecy. Jesus is now King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). He is now reigning over all things for the sake of the church (Zc 9:9,10, see comments Ep 1:20-23). He will reign as King until He has subjected all enemies, the last of which is death (See comments 1 Co 15:26-28). He reigns, therefore, throughout this time when enemies attack the saints (Rm 5:17). But this time will come to an end. ***One Lord:*** See Ep 4:4-6. ***Turned as a plain:*** See comments Is 2:2-4; Mc 4:1-4. The city of God would be exalted above all the surrounding territory of the enemy. ***Gate:*** Though these particular gates of the city are not known, the meaning is that the walls of the city would extend in every direction, thus affording protection to all who were within the city. Throughout the history of physical Jerusalem, she succumbed to the attack of many nations. The spiritual Jerusalem, however, would be exalted above the mountains of other nations, and thus offer spiritual safety to all who would come within her walls (Is 2:2-4).

14:12 This graphic picture portrays the living dead because of their attacks against the people of God. Their flesh would rot as they struggled against the saints. Every part of their bodies that was used in opposition to the saints of God would rot away while they persecuted the church.

14:13-15 God would turn the enemies against one another. Such a condition prevailed in the society of Jerusalem before she was given over to the destruction of the Babylonians (Mc 7:2-6). Now it was time for the same social conditions to cause a moral digression within the societies of nations that would struggle against the new Jerusalem of God's people. In such a manner the Roman Empire fell, for she died from within herself. Rome became morally weak, leading to the fall of the city of Rome and empire in A.D. 476. When men give up the moral standards of God, the people of society turn on themselves, and thus the nation falls from within. ***Fight at Jerusalem:*** There would be a united stand within the spiritual Jerusalem against the onslaught of all enemies. The saints would draw from the wealth of the nations in order to make their stand against those who would oppose the work of God through them. Though surrounded by great armies with great beasts of war, the beasts would all succumb to the plague.

14:16-19 ***Everyone who is left:*** During any onslaught against the saints, there would be those who would fall. However, there would always be a remnant of the faithful. These would go up to worship the King as the Jews, throughout their history, went to the tabernacle of God for the feast of tabernacles. ***Feast of tabernacles:*** This was the annual feast of the Jews when all went before the Lord for a festive time of rejoicing (Lv 23:39-44). In the symbolic picture that Zechariah gives, both Jews and Gentiles would go before the Lord with rejoicing and celebration. ***Be no rain on them:*** The result of not going before the Lord would be that there would be

drought, not blessing from the Lord. The Lord would inflict judgment upon those who would work against His eternal plan through the saints (See Is 60:12; Mc 5:15).

14:20,21 Zechariah now turns to the true nature of the new Jerusalem. All the horses and instruments of war are cut off from the city. There would be no war within the city, for all would be holy to the Lord (See Ex 28:36-38; see comments Is 2:1-4). That which was unclean (the Canaanites) would have been cast out. The glorious church would be a place of peace, dedicated to the service of and sacrifice to the Lord. The church would be the assembly of those who had given their lives as a living sacrifice (See comments Rm 12:1,2).

Malachi

WRITER

As with most of the minor prophets, we know nothing about the prophet Malachi other than what is revealed in the book itself. Malachi is a shortened version of the name Malachiyah, meaning "the messenger of the Lord." Malachi's name defines the nature of his prophecy in reference to the messenger of the Lord that would be sent before the coming of the Messiah. In fact, the word "messenger" refers to three different individuals in the book. It first refers to Malachi himself as the messenger who delivered this message to Israel. It is then used to refer to John the Baptist as the messenger who would announce the coming of the Messiah. And finally, it refers to the Messiah. As the immediate messenger of God, Malachi was a straightforward prophet of the Lord in that he was direct in approaching the negligence of the people.

DATE

The book was written to those who had returned from the captivity in 536 B.C., and were offering sacrifices at the altar (1:7-10). Since the people were under a governor (1:8), the audience Malachi addressed would have been living while Palestine was still under Medo-Persian control. Some of the priests were setting the wrong example by marrying foreign women (2:11), which was a problem that existed during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The book, therefore, would have been written sometime during the 5th century B.C. when this problem was prevalent among the returnees. Malachi, therefore, sought to restore the spiritual thinking of the people.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The book may have been written during the middle or latter part of the 5th century. At this time in history, the Near East was still controlled by the Medo-Persian Empire under Artaxerxes (465-425 B.C.). However, the expansion of the Persians to the east was thwarted by the Greeks. The Greeks dealt a stinging blow of defeat to the Persians at the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. In 480 B.C. the Greeks made a heroic stand against the Persians at Thermopylae. And then Xerxes was defeated at Plataea in 479 B.C. With these major defeats of the Persians, the Greeks were beginning to rise as the third world empire of the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7 (See comments).

Led by Zerubbabel, the initial exiles returned in 536 B.C. to reclaim their homeland possessions in the land of Palestine. Through the encouragement of both Haggai and Zechariah, the temple was rebuilt between 520 and 515 B.C. Ezra then rose up in order to reinstitute correct behavior and worship according to the law of God. In 444 B.C. Nehemiah, who was appointed governor of the land, led another group of exiles from the land of their former captors in order to encourage the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. In 432 B.C. Nehemiah made a second visit to Jerusalem. Since Malachi does not mention Nehemiah, we would conclude that his ministry took place before the arrival of Nehemiah, possibly between 460 and 450 B.C. (See comments Er and Ne).

It was a time when the ceremonies of the law were ceremonially offered by a heartless people. They offered animals that were not fit to be offered to God (1:8). The priests were neglecting their duties (2:7,8). There was intermarriage with foreign women (2:11). It was an economic time when the people were struggling, and thus they complained that God had blessed the nations, but had ignored them. There is no message in Malachi against the old problem of idolatry that was characteristic with those Jews who had been taken into captivity. Rather, the message was against those returnees who had forsaken the Old Testament concerning their behavior as the chosen people of God. Through their insincere sacrificial ceremonies and intermarriage with foreign women, they were working against the efforts of God to reestablish Israel in the land as the people of God. Their breaking of God's law meant that they would not follow Him.

Remember, Repent & Return To God
(1:1 – 4:6)

Outline: (1) God loves Israel (1:1-5), (2) Rebuke of the religious leadership (1:6 – 2:9), (3) Marriage to foreign women (2:10-16), (4) God's judgment day (2:17 – 3:5), (5) Robbing God (3:6-12), (6) Triumph of the righteous (3:13 – 4:3), (7) Exhortation for faithfulness (4:4-6)

Chapter 1
GOD LOVES ISRAEL

1:1 The word "burden" is derived from a Hebrew word that means "to lift up," and thus could also be translated "oracle" in reference to the prophet lifting up his voice to speak the word of God. ***Malachi:*** The name Malachi means "the messenger of the Lord." Some have suggested that the name was descriptive of the message of the book. Since the contemporary prophets of Haggai and Zechariah made no mention of Malachi, some have suggested that the word "Malachi" would refer only to the fact that the oracle was the message from God. The Septuagint rendered the word "my messenger," indicating that Malachi was not a proper name, but reference was to the oracle that came through God's messenger. Since all other prophetic books of the Old Testament carry the name of the prophet, it would be unique if this book did not do the same. We would conclude, therefore, that "Malachi" was a proper name, though the name also meant that Malachi was a messenger.

1:2-5 ***I have loved:*** God chose Israel as the nation through whom He would bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. All the work among the nations throughout the history of Israel, was done for the purpose of preserving Israel until she had fulfilled her destiny of bringing forth the Messiah. The ministry of Malachi was to continue the preservation of Israel. God sent Malachi in order to correct the behavior of the people and to encourage those who feared God. The purpose for their faithfulness to God was to maintain the identity of the people of God through whom the Messiah would come in the future. ***In what have You loved us:*** Having gone through the captivities of the Assyrians and Babylonians, the returnees to whom the book was directed had become skeptical of God's work through them as a nation. They were suffering while the nations prospered. At the time the book was written, the Israelites were a community of poverty-stricken residents. They were thus disheartened and disillusioned concerning God's work through them. ***I loved Jacob:*** God chose Jacob over Esau in order to carry out His eternal plan of redemption (Dt 7:8; Hs 11:1). Since He knew the future of the descendants of both sons of Abraham, He chose Jacob who would produce a better heritage for a nation through whom the Blessing promised to Abraham would come (Gn 12:1-3). ***Laid waste ... his heritage:*** This was the proof that God was with Israel. The Edomite nation was discontinued, but Israel was preserved when God returned them to the land of their heritage. Throughout the struggles of Israel during the years of their captivity, the Edomites revealed their unacceptable character (See Ps 137:7; Lm 4:21,22; Ez 25:12; Ob 21). Some time before the writing of these words, the Nabatean Arabs dislodged the Edomites from their mountainous stronghold. They were driven from Mount Seir. ***They will build:*** Though the Edomites might try to reclaim their territory, and reestablish their identity, God would work against every effort they made in order to become a nation. Because of her wicked behavior against Israel, Edom would forever be terminated as a nation. God's judgment against the Edomites for their wickedness was that they would never again exist as a nation. The termination of the Edomite nation would be God's proof to Israel that He was still working in the lives of His people in order to preserve them for the purpose for which He had chosen Jacob. Though Edom would never again exist as a nation, the Idumeans (Edomites) as a people would reside in the southern part of Palestine. From them would eventually rise the family of the Herods. Herod the Great, who would be designated by the Romans as the king of Judea before the birth of Christ, would come from the Idumeans.

REBUKE OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

1:6-10 ***A son honors a father:*** Because God was the Father of Israel (Ex 4:22,23), He deserved the honor that was due a father. God created the nation of Israel by bringing it out of Egyptian captivity (2:10; Is 64:8; Jr 31:9). With a strong arm He redeemed Israel (Dt 32:6; Is 63:16). He thus deserved their honor because He was the father and creator of the nation of Israel. ***Master:*** Israel was the servant, but did not give obedience to God as their Master. Since God was their creator, then He was to be honored. If He was their Master, then He was to be obeyed. ***In what have we despised Your name:*** The religious leaders showed disrespect for God as their creator and master by not obeying the laws concerning the offerings at the altar. They thus disregarded God's laws, and by doing such showed no respect for God as their master. ***Table of the Lord:*** This was the altar where the animals were sacrificed. By allowing the people to bring blemished animals as their sacrifices to the Lord, the priests were showing disrespect to God by violating the laws concerning sacrifices to be broken. ***Offer the blind:*** They brought blemished animals to be sacrificed on the altar (Dt 15:21). According to the law, only the best of the animals were to be offered as sacrifices to the Lord. ***Evil:*** That which they possibly thought was only a minor violation of the law, was actually considered evil by God. The offering of that which was according to the law of God was the responsibility of the priests. They were to check to see if an animal that was to be offered at the altar was without blemish. ***The governor:*** This would have been the governor of Palestine who was commissioned by the Persians who controlled the land at the time Malachi delivered this message (See Ne 5:14; Hg 1:1). ***Shut the doors:*** It would be better not to offer the sacrifice than to offer that which was contrary to the law of God. God does not allow substitutes for that which He requires (Compare Gl 1:6-9; 2 Jn 9,10; Rv 22:18,19).

1:11,12 ***My name will be great:*** The words "will be" are in italics, and thus do not necessarily need to be in the texts in the future tense. Some students feel that reference in this text is to be taken metaphorically, and thus reference was to the time of the Messianic era during which those of the church throughout all nations would bring praise to the name of God. But the passage could be understood to refer to the time of those Israelites who were living at the time of Malachi's ministry. The contextual understanding would be that God does not depend solely on Israel only to praise and glory. Even at the time of Israel's existence, God was receiving praise and worship from others who were not of Israel. There were those Gentiles by faith who had converted to the faith of Israel.

Since the Israelites had been scattered throughout the nations during the captivities, then certainly we must assume that they did their work in converting Gentiles to the faith of Abraham. Since the problem that Malachi approached was with those Jews who were in Palestine at the time of writing, we must not assume that the same problem prevailed with those Jews who were still living in the lands to which they had been taken during the captivity. Those who were living in the land were violating the ceremonial laws in reference to sacrifices, but we must not assume that all Jews throughout the Persian Empire were doing the same.

1:13,14 By their violation of that which was required by the law of God, they were manifesting their feelings that the law of God was a burden to bear (See comments 1 Jn 5:3). Some were bringing stolen animals to the altar, and the priests were condoning their behavior (See Lv 3:1,6; Hs 4:9). Since the priests manifested a life-style of deceit, the people followed their example. What they were offering manifested the fact that they were being stingy with God. They gave God the leftovers and that which they rejected. In doing so, they manifested their lack of reverence for God.

Chapter 2

2:1-9 When God instituted the priests among Israel, He promised them the blessing of the support of the people if they carried out their duties according to His law. However, in this case, if they continued in their inequity and indifference, God would command a curse upon them. They would lose the support of the people. However, if they repented, God would not bring this curse upon them. ***I will curse your blessings:*** Reference was to their benefits that they enjoyed in their service at the temple (See Nm 18:8-19). When the people brought sacrifices to the altar, they had the privilege of taking some of the offering for their own sustenance. In their insincere service, however it seems that the curse had already begun. The poverty-stricken people could not bring sacrifices to the altar, and the sacrifices they brought were blemished. ***Rebuke your seed:*** What would possibly happen was that the offspring, or the descendants of the priests, would be removed from being priests. ***Refuse:*** Reference was to the intestinal contents of the slain animals at the altar. The existing priests would be removed as the refuse of the offerings was taken out of the city (Lv 4:11,12; see 1 Sm 2:29,30). In order to correct the people, the intention of God in this context was to correct the religious leadership (See comments Js 3:1). ***My covenant might be with Levi:*** This covenant is not specifically stated in the Old Testament, other than the fact that Levi was in a mutual covenant relationship with God as a part of the entire Israelite family (Compare Dt 33:8-11). In God's covenant with Israel, the Levites were given a special intercessory relationship with the people as ministers to God on behalf of the people. In the context, Levi stands for all the Levitical priests of Israel who stood before God. ***The law of truth was in his mouth:*** The Levites were to be the teachers of the law. They were to set an example of purity and obedience before the people. They were to exemplify in their lives the nature of the commandments of God. The Levites were to administer justice and be peacemakers among the people. They were to be known for the truth that proceeded out of their mouths. ***He is the messenger of the Lord:*** Through his teaching of the law of God to the people, the Levitical priest communicated the will of God to the people. ***Messenger:*** Malachi was God's messenger to the people (1:1), as well as John the Baptist who would be the messenger sent before the Messiah (3:1). As the messengers of God, both Malachi and John delivered to the people the message of God. ***Departed out of the way:*** The priests of Malachi's day had forgotten their way. It may have been that they had forgotten the law of God (Hs 4:6), and thus did not know what to do according to the law of God. Or, it may have been that they were indifferent to the law of God. Whatever the case in the historical context, they were still under the condemnation of God for not functioning as priests according to the law of God. If anyone would presume to be a leader for God, he must know what God requires of His leaders. Those who presume to be leaders, but do not know the word of God, are blind guides. ***Caused many to stumble:*** Those who would presume to be leaders for God's people take upon themselves a grave responsibility (Js 3:1). In this case, the spiritual leaders led people away from God. Through their behavior, they became blind guides in the sense that they did not honor the commandments of God (Mt 15:14; see comments Mk 7:1-9). ***Corrupted the covenant:*** They violated the conditions of the covenant of the priesthood. ***Have been partial in the law:*** In their application of the law of God, they became partial to the wealthy. God had given them the blessing of enjoying the support of the people through offerings. But now they had taken advantage of their full-time support, and thus became partial to the rich in order to maintain their office as priests. If the ministry of Malachi took place during the drought about which Haggai spoke, then there were no offerings, or at least the offerings were few in coming. The full-time priests would thus be cursed for the lack of offerings. It may have been that the full-time priests catered to the rich in order to receive some offerings. In doing so, they ignored the poor.

MARRIAGE TO FOREIGN WOMEN

2:10-12 The background for the rebuke of this context is God's purpose for the restoration of Israel to the land, and the Israelites' renewing of their identity as the people of God. In order for the promises to the fathers to be identified as fulfilled through Israel, the people of God had to be identified as Israel at the time of fulfillment. For this reason, the people were dealing treacherously in that they married foreign women. They had repented of their idol worship that was the cause for their going into captivity. However, when they returned, they were marrying foreign women, and by doing such, they were destroying the identity of God's people among the nations. They were marrying themselves out of existence as Jews. ***Did not one God create us:*** The one God created the nation of Israel by bringing them out of Egyptian captivity (See Is 43:1-21). God had created them as a nation and race of people, but they were destroying their identity through intermarriage with foreign women. ***Profaning the covenant:*** God had established a covenant with Israel. But their assimilation into the local

people through marriage of foreign women violated the conditions of the covenant (See comments Dt 7:3,4). The priests were allowing such to happen among the people, for they were also putting away the wives of their youth in order to marry younger, foreign women (See comments Er 9:1,2). ***Profaned the holiness of the Lord:*** Israel was a people that was separated from the nations of the world. They were thus a holy people (Lv 20:24). But in their marriage of foreign women, they violated the sanctity of their holiness. Their practice was an abomination to the Lord, something that was detestable in His sight. They had been created as a nation. But through their intermarriage with foreign women, they were working against the plan of God to reestablish Israel for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world (See 1 Kg 11:4). ***May the Lord cut off:*** God will cut off the males of the household who profane the covenant relationship between God and Israel through marriage of foreign women. With the men being cut off from the household, there would be no one who could bring the offering to the Lord.

2:13-16 ***Another thing:*** As previously mentioned, the first sin they were doing was marrying foreign women. The second abomination was that they forsook their Jewish wife in order to marry the foreign women. They already had an Israelite wife, but then they put this wife away in order to marry foreign women. ***Cover the altar of the Lord with tears:*** With the offering of sacrifices came the common practice of mourning. In order to make their sacrifices more acceptable, they would pour out more tears. However, what God wanted was an obedient behavior of life. They needed to change their behavior, not pour out more ceremonial tears. ***Wife of your youth:*** The older men were putting away the wives that they had married when they were young in order to marry younger, more beautiful wives in their older age. ***Wife of your covenant:*** When one marries another, he or she comes into a covenant relationship with his or her partner. It is a covenant that is made in the eyes of God, and thus honored by God (See Gn 31:50; Pv 2:16,17). When one puts away his or her mate, he or she has broken the marriage covenant. ***In flesh and spirit they are His:*** When two are joined together in marriage, they become one in order to bring forth children to the glory of God. Parents who exemplify godliness before their children bring forth offspring who will continue their spiritual heritage (See comments Ep 5:22 – 6:4). In the historical context of this passage, the Jewish men were putting away the Jewish wives of their youth in order to marry foreign women. In doing so, they were bringing the influence of idolatry again into Israel, and thus influencing the children away from God. ***I hate divorce:*** Moses gave revelation concerning the certificate of divorce (Dt 24). However, the certificate of divorce that was revealed through Moses was given in order to bring the Israelites into conformity to God's law concerning marriage, that one man be married to one woman for life (See comments Mt 5:31,32; 19:3-10). In the context here, God hated the putting away of their first wife in order to marry another woman. The divorce here was based on the desire the man had toward another woman other than the wife of his youth. The detestable thing that was happening was that the wife of his youth, who was now as old as he was, was rejected for the sake of his marriage to a younger, more attractive woman. The man, therefore, was thinking selfishly, and thus not giving honor to his wife with whom he had been in a covenant relationship for many years (See comments Ep 5:25-33). God hated this practice of divorce for such reasons. ***Covering himself with violence:*** The ancient custom was when one claimed a woman to be his wife, he would cast his garment over her (See Dt 22:30; Rt 3:9; Ez 16:8). When a man put away the wife of his youth, he was dealing treacherously with his wife by taking another to be his wife. His treachery was in the fact that he had promised a lifetime covenant with his first wife, and then broke the covenant by spreading his garment over another woman.

GOD'S JUDGMENT DAY

2:17 This verse introduces the subject of those who had wearied God through their complaint that it appeared that He prospered the unrighteous, while He neglected His people (See Is 1:14; 43:24). The struggling Israelites looked to the nations from which they had come from captivity. They wondered why those nations were prospering, and yet they as the returnees to the land of Palestine, were struggling to survive. Their struggles led them to doubt whether God was actually with them.

Chapter 3

3:1-5 The complaint of 2:17 came from those who perceived that living unrighteously would not hinder one's prosperity. But this belief was to be corrected with the coming of the messenger of the Lord. ***My messenger:*** This passage is quoted in reference to the coming of John the Baptist (Mk 1:2,3; see Is 40:3-5; 52:7; 57:14). The priests of Malachi's audience were partial to the wealthy, as those priests of Jesus' time (Lk 16:14). The historical background, therefore, would indicate that the coming of the Messenger would be in a time similar to what Malachi was experiencing in his own generation. When Jesus visited the temple during His ministry, and cast out the money changers, the fulfillment of the prophecy in John the Baptist would have been verified (Jn 2:13,14). ***The Lord:*** This is from the Hebrew word Adonai. It is not the word for Yahweh. This was the Lord (Adonai) whom Peter announced on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (At 2:36; see 1 Co 12:3; Ph 2:11). Jesus was God in the flesh coming to His people (Jn 1:14). ***Even the Messenger:*** This Messenger is a different messenger than the one who was previously noted at the beginning of the verse. This is the incarnate Lord Jesus, the Messenger of the new covenant (Jr 31:31-34; Gl 3:17; Hb 9:7-13). He is the Mediator of the new covenant (Hb 12:24). He came to ratify the new covenant with His blood offering (Mt 26:28; Hb 13:20). Jesus was the revelation of the mystery of God (Ep 3:1-5). ***Come to His temple:*** The judgment of God would first come to His people. He would first cleanse His people (Ez 9:6; 1 Pt 4:17). ***He will purify the sons of Levi:*** The Lord would come to purify the priesthood. After the gospel was initially preached on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, there were many priests who were obedient to the faith (At 6:7). However, the meaning here is beyond the phys-

ical sons of Levi, for in the Christian community all those who have obeyed the gospel are priests before God (1 Pt 2:5,9). The priesthood of disciples was cleansed by their obedience to the gospel by baptism (At 2:38). As they walk in the light of the gospel, they are continually cleansed by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7). ***Like launderer's soap:*** A launderer was one who bleached and cleansed the clothes. ***I will come near to you for judgment:*** The Lord would come in order to execute judgment upon the unrighteous. Jesus came into the world for judgment (Jn 9:39). Judgment came according to how one responded to Jesus. If one rejected Him, then they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (Jn 1:11; 3:18; see comments At 13:46). When John the Baptist spoke of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire, he certainly had this prophecy in mind (See comments Mt 3:11,12). Those who would receive the Lord Jesus, would receive the benefits of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. However, those who would reject Jesus, would receive the baptism of fire in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). They would be consumed in the fire of judgment that would purify the people of God (Hb 12:29). ***Witness against:*** Verse 5 answers the question of 2:17. Once the temple of God's people was cleansed, then would be set right the injustices that prevailed among the people at the time of Malachi's ministry. In the community of God's people, there would be no sorcerers, adulterers, or those who dealt unjustly with employees. Widows and orphans would be cared for in the church of God's people (At 6:1-7). Those social sins that prevailed at the time of Malachi would be corrected in the community of God.

ROBBING GOD

3:6-9 ***I do not change:*** Men change in reference to their obedience to God. God does not change His commandments in order to comply with the behavior of men. He does not change in reference to His promises (Hb 6:17,18). The Jews were still claimed by God, and thus God did not cast off His people as He did the nations that surrounded them, including the nations that took them into captivity. God could have justly cast off His people because they broke the conditions of the covenant. But because He does not change, He maintained the covenant in order to preserve His people. ***Return to Me:*** Returning to God through repentance is more than a change of mind and sorrow for sin. It is a change in behavior. It is a return to obedience to the will of God (See comments Mt 3:8). ***Will a man rob God:*** According to the law, a tenth of the produce and livestock was to be given to God for the sustenance of the Levites (Lv 27:30-32; Nm 18:21-24; compare Ne 9:38; 10:32-39; 13:10-14). The people were robbing God in that they were not giving that which was required by the law. ***You are cursed:*** During the days of Haggai, the land was suffering from drought because the people were being indifferent concerning the reconstruction of the temple. The same situation may have prevailed at this time because the people were being stingy in their offerings. They were consuming the offerings on themselves, rather than bringing the tithe to the temple for the priests.

3:10-12 ***Bring all the tithes:*** The people were evidently holding back part of the tithe for themselves, thinking that they needed it more than the priests. The situation may have been that only a few were offering their tithes, and thus the support of the priests depended on the support of a few. Others were robbing God by not tithing at all. Malachi's exhortation was that everyone must bring their tithe in order that the priesthood be supported (See Ne 13:10-12; see comments 1 Co 9:14). ***Storehouse:*** The grain offerings were stored in the temple. ***Open to you the windows of heaven:*** God had held back the rain in order to generate repentance. If they were obedient in bringing their tithes, then God would bring forth the rain. In their poverty, therefore, they were to manifest their obedience to the law of God in reference to tithing. It was not the principle that God would first bless them with rain for their crops, and then they would give out of their abundance. The lesson was that they must give out of their poverty, and then God would send the abundance (Compare Hg 2:19; Zc 8:9-13). ***All nations will call you blessed:*** The prosperity of the land would be the signal to the nations that God was blessing His people because of their obedience to His will. We must keep in mind that the bringing of the tithe in order that Israel prosper was a promise that God had made in His covenant with Israel as a nation. The promise of prosperity as a result of obedience is not a promise to the church, or any individual member of the church. God prospered Israel in order to preserve the nation for the coming of the Savior. The Christian lives under a covenant wherein the Savior has already come. His prosperity will come at the end when Jesus comes again. One's poor conditions as a Christian, therefore, are not directly the result of some sin in his life. Poverty is more often the result of one's economic environment. However, if a nation lives according the principles of the Bible, these principles will lead to the development of the country.

TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHTEOUS

3:13-15 Because of their struggles in poverty, the people seem to have become skeptical concerning the presence of God's help among them. The people had been talking among themselves, complaining about their circumstances. In their complaining, they were actually murmuring against God. ***It is vain to serve God:*** As they compared their struggle in poverty with the surrounding nations, they wondered if God was working among them. It seemed that the nations were blessed in their unrighteous idolatry, while they suffered as God's people in poverty. They thus concluded that there was no benefit in being faithful to God, for God was not bringing in blessings into their lives. ***Kept His ordinance ... walked mournfully:*** They had ceremonially performed the outward appearance of keeping the ordinances of God. However, inside they were grumbling against God because He had not prospered them. At the same time, they saw the proud of the nations go undisciplined by the Lord. The idolatrous nations went unpunished, while they were punished in their poverty. What seems to be the situation was that they were feeling sorry for themselves in their unrepentant state.

3:16-18 ***Those who feared the Lord:*** This would be a different group than those who previously complained against the Lord for their depressed situation. The godly group harkened

to the words of Malachi, understanding that their situation was caused by their unrepentant behavior. They thus turned from their wayward ways in obedience to God. The confidence that was revealed by Malachi was that they would be remembered by God in His book of remembrance. It was not that God would forget. The thought is that when God remembers, He is taking action to bless and protect. His remembrance is not simply a recollection of one's existence and identity. ***My peculiar treasure:*** God treasures those who serve Him. It is for this reason that the church of God's people is His unique possession (1 Pt 2:5-10). ***I will spare them:*** Not only is the promise to preserve those who fear Him valid in this life, but also in the eternal life to come. ***Return and discern:*** Once the godly applied themselves to repentance and a change in their behavior, they would be blessed by God. The blessing of the formerly promised rains would be an indication that they had turned to God.

Chapter 4

In order to understand this final prophecy of the Old Testament, and the final written prophecy that was given to the Jews, two points must be clearly kept in mind. First, the prophecy was to a people whom God had used since the days they were delivered from Egyptian captivity in order to perpetuate the promises made to the fathers (Gn 12:1-3). National Israel was the vehicle through which God would bring into the world the Blessing, the Redeemer and Savior. The Old Testament prophets were sent to preserve national Israel as long as possible until the Assyrian (722/21 B.C.) and Babylonian (586 B.C.) captivities. The prophets who came after the return of the captives, beginning in 536 B.C., were sent in order to move Israel to reestablish herself in the land of Palestine. Israel as God's people had to be reestablished in order to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah in fulfillment of the prophecies.

Second, once the purpose for which Israel was called as a nation was fulfilled, then it would be terminated as a peculiar people that was in a unique covenant relationship with God. This happened in A.D. 70 with the termination of national Israel in Palestine when the Roman Empire, the fourth kingdom of Daniel's prophecies, destroyed Jerusalem (See comments Dn 2 & 7). Before the fall of national Israel, God would send forth the Redeemer in order to call out of Israel those who feared God. Once those who feared God were called out of national Israel, then God terminated national Israel.

4:1-3 ***Burn as an oven:*** In the destruction of Jerusalem, those who had rejected Jesus were consumed. All the Jewish genealogical family records were destroyed in the burning of the city and the temple (See comments Mt 24). ***To you who fear My name:*** Those of Israel who would be living at the time the Sun of Righteousness would come, would be called out of national Israel through the preaching of the gospel (1 Th 2:12; 2 Th 2:14). ***Sun of Righteousness:*** Jesus was the rising light that brought hope to those who feared God and were living at the time of His coming (See Jn 1:4-9,19; 8:12). ***You will go forth and grow:*** The spiritual Israel would grow exceedingly as a result of both men and women accepting Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (See comments Mk 16:15-20; At 6:7; 8:4). ***Tread down the wicked:*** The disciples of Jesus would crush the head of Satan by the preaching of the gospel (Gn 3:15; Rm 16:20).

EXHORTATION FOR FAITHFULNESS

4:4-6 ***Remember the law of Moses:*** This statement forces the interpreter of this message to remain in the historical context of national Israel, for the law was given to Israel, not to the church. The historical fulfillment of the prophecy, therefore, was in reference to Israel, not the church at the end of time. The exhortation here was that Israel continue to abide in the statues of the Old Testament law in order that Israel be preserved unto the coming of the Messiah at the end of national Israel. Those who feared God, continued in the law (Ec 12:13). However, those who rejected the word of God by the time of the coming of the Messiah, were consumed in the oven of the destruction of Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24; Mk 7:1-9). ***I will send you Elijah:*** This statement refers to John the Baptist (Mt 11:14; Lk 1:17). It clearly identifies the time of the historical fulfillment of this prophecy. John the Baptist, as the forerunner of the Messiah, went forth in the power and spirit of Elijah. ***Before the coming of the great and terrible day:*** This coming of the Lord in the prophecy was a clear reference to the coming of the incarnate Son of God. His coming was a terrible day for those who rejected Him (See comments Jn 12:48). Those who rejected Him would be burned in the oven of the destruction of Jerusalem, the baptism of fire upon national Israel (See comments Mt 3:11,12). The great and terrible day of the Lord was the terrible day of the termination of national Israel (See comments Mt 24; compare comments 2 Pt 3). It would not be contextually consistent to assume that the period of time between the coming of Elijah and the day of the Lord would be over two thousand years. The fulfillment of the events of this prophecy, must be in the 1st century with the coming of the messenger and forerunner of the Son of God, and the actual coming in the flesh of the Son of God (Jn 1:1-14). It was a coming of the Lord in time, not at the end of time. ***He will turn the hearts:*** The coming of Jesus at the end of time will not be a coming and call for repentance. It will be a coming of finality and destruction (2 Th 1:6-9). It will be a coming to call God's people out of this world (1 Th 4:13-18). However, at the end of the purpose for which God called Israel, Jesus came to call those of Israel unto repentance (Lk 13:3). It was a time in history when God was about to terminate national Israel, and thus Jesus came to call those who feared God out of Israel. ***Strike the earth:*** When Jesus comes in His final coming, He will strike the earth with destruction. But the striking in this context was to be a striking of drought and suffering, as the curse that was delivered to the Jews who had insincerely offered their ceremonial sacrifices and robbed God during the ministry of Malachi. It was a striking in the destruction of Jerusalem. ***Curse:*** The curse that was to come in the history of national Israel was termination. Jesus came to the Jews, but the majority at the time of His coming did not accept Him (Jn 1:11). God's blessing was thus forever taken from them because they rejected the Blessing of all the world that was promised to and came from Abraham (Gn 12:1-3).